THE BOOK OF ENOCH

The Ethiopian Bible, the Sons of God, and the Authority of Apostolic Scripture

"What saith the scripture?"
— Romans 4:3

DAVID CLARKE

The Book of Enoch

The Ethiopian Bible, the Sons of God, and the Authority of Apostolic Scripture

David Clarke

Published by Bierton Particular Baptist
11 Hayling Close
Fareham
Hampshire
PO143AE

2026

Copyright

Dedication

To the saints meeting at The Bugle Hotel, and sometimes at The Monks Rest, Titchfield,

among whom I have had the privilege of fellowship and the opportunity to study the Scriptures.

This book is dedicated to them with the sincere desire that we may all continue to examine everything by the Word of God and

"earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."
— Jude 3

Contents

WHY I HAVE WRITTEN THIS BOOK 9

INTRODUCTION 15

PART ONE—THE BOOK OF ENOCH, GENESIS 6, AND THE WATCHERS 17

CHAPTER 1—Ancient Tradition and the Word of God 17

CHAPTER 2— The Historic Enoch and the book Bearing His name. 19

CHAPTER 3— The Sons of God: Angelic Descent or Human Apostasy 21

CHAPTER 4 — The Nephilim, Giants, and Men of Renown 25

CHAPTER 5 — Can Angels Mate With Women? 29

CHAPTER 6 — When Speculation Becomes Religious Fable Filling the Gaps With Fabulous Stories 32

CHAPTER 7 — The Canon Came From God 38

PART TWO—Apostoic Canonization And The Authority Of The New Testament 38

CHAPTER 8—The Apostolic Foundation and a Closed Canon 43

CHAPTER 9—Scripture Recognised Within the Apostolic Age 45

CHAPTER 10—Ed Stevens and the Case for Apostolic Canonization 48

PART THREE—WERE ALL THE NEW TESTAMENT BOOKS WRITTEN BEFORE AD 70? 54

CHAPTER 11—The Gospels, Acts, and the Apostolic Epistles 54

CHAPTER 12—The Main Difficulty: The Johannine Writings 59

CHAPTER 13—Revelation and the Nearness of Its Fulfilment 62

CHAPTER 14—John A. T. Robinson and the Case for an Early New Testament 65

CHAPTER 15—Writing, Collecting, and Certifying the Canon 69

PART FOUR—AD 70, PROPHECY, AND APOSTOLIC INTERPRETATION 71

CHAPTER 16—Jerusalem, the Temple, and "This Generation" 71

CHAPTER 17—The Fig Tree, Israel, and 1948 76

CHAPTER 18—Israel, the New Covenant, and the Apostolic Interpretation of Prophecy 79

FINAL CONCLUSION 89

FURTHER PUBLICATIONS 107

DIFFICULTIES ASSOCIATED WITH ARTICLES OF RELIGION 107

ELDERSHIP IS MALE 112

AND SUCH WERE SOME OF YOU 113

THE PAROUSIA 115

WHAT HAPPENED IN A.D. 70 116

FINAL DECADE BEFORE THE END 118

JUSTIFICATION AN ACT OF GOD 121

WHY I HAVE WRITTEN THIS BOOK

> *"...that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."*
>
> — Jude 3

The occasion for writing this book arises out of more than fifty years of Christian experience. Since becoming a Christian at the age of twenty-one in 1970, I have repeatedly found myself having to examine differing teachings and practices among professing Christians and to ask one fundamental question: What does the Scripture actually teach?

When I first became a Christian, I knew very little about Christianity. I was initially associated with an Assemblies of God Pentecostal church in Aylesbury. Through the encouragement of other believers, the reading of the Bible, and later the study of older Christian literature, I began to learn the doctrines of the Gospel for myself. I soon became aware that Christians differed considerably concerning the way of salvation, the sovereignty of God, the freedom of the human will, election, redemption, and many other doctrines. In seeking to understand these matters, I became convinced of what are commonly called the doctrines of grace.

In 1976 I joined the Bierton Strict and Particular Baptist Church, a Calvinistic Baptist church. I remained there for approximately eight years. Eventually, however, difficulties arose which convinced me that longstanding traditions could themselves obscure the doctrines a church professed to maintain. In particular, I became concerned when teaching consistent with general redemption was permitted within a church professing Particular Baptist principles.

Sadly, during the difficulties which followed, I turned from the Lord in unbelief and fell into open sin. After approximately three years, I was recovered by the grace of God and brought again to repentance and faith. That experience left a lasting impression upon me. I had learned personally that turning aside from the truth of God is not a light matter.

After my recovery I sought Christian fellowship with a church known as Jesus Is Lord in Warsash. At that time the church was considering the appointment of women as elders. Having become

convinced from Scripture that the eldership of the church is a male office, I raised my concerns. I was eventually told to remain silent concerning the matter. This led me later to record my reasons in a book entitled Eldership Is Male. My concern was not merely with one question concerning church government. The deeper issue was again the authority of Scripture. If Scripture teaches something, are Christians at liberty to set it aside because contemporary opinion has changed?

Following further severe personal difficulties, which I have related elsewhere in The Fall, Desperation and Recovery, the providence of God led me into mission work in the Philippines. There I was privileged to meet and work with former criminals in New Bilibid Prison who had become Christians. During that period I again encountered disputes between Arminian and Calvinistic teaching. This strengthened my conviction that Christians must be encouraged to examine doctrine directly from Scripture rather than merely inherit the theological assumptions of those around them.

I returned to the United Kingdom in 2003. Later I sought fellowship with a Strict Baptist church but was rejected because of my understanding of Hebrews 4. I had become convinced that the rest spoken of there is the spiritual rest believers possess in Christ, rather than the continuing observance of the Mosaic seventh-day Sabbath. There followed a lengthy period without settled church fellowship, during which I increasingly gave myself to reading, study, and writing.

Eventually I began attending Hill Park Baptist Church and also became involved with Christians in Titchfield whose background included charismatic and dispensational views of prophecy. For approximately three years we studied the book of Revelation. These experiences raised further questions concerning how prophecy should be interpreted, whether modern political events should determine the meaning of biblical prophecy, and what authority should be given to claimed revelations, traditions, or teachings which cannot be demonstrated from Scripture.

During my years at Hill Park Baptist Church, I had hoped that some of the doctrinal concerns which troubled me might in time be corrected. I remained there for approximately five years, seeking

fellowship and hoping for greater agreement upon the authority and teaching of Scripture. During that period I became increasingly concerned about the rejection of the sovereignty of God and the acceptance of general redemption.

One matter eventually became especially serious to me. I had written and published The West and the Qur'an, in which I openly rejected the Qur'an as divine revelation and maintained that the teaching of Muhammad cannot be reconciled with the Gospel of Jesus Christ as taught by His Apostles. In particular, the Qur'an's teaching concerning Christ stands in direct opposition to the apostolic testimony concerning His person and work.

I regarded this as no secondary theological difference. If Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the promised Messiah, crucified and risen from the dead, then a religious system which denies fundamental apostolic truths concerning Him cannot be treated as though it were simply another acceptable expression of faith in God.

What deeply troubled me was that the position I had expressed in The West and the Qur'an was not received at Hill Park with the same seriousness with which I believed Scripture required the matter to be treated. I had already remained for several years despite other doctrinal disagreements, hoping that change might come. But when the views expressed in that book were rejected, I concluded that I could no longer remain in good conscience.

My decision to leave was therefore not the result of one isolated disagreement. It came after a prolonged period in which I had become increasingly concerned about the rejection of the sovereignty of God, the acceptance of general redemption, and, finally, what I regarded as an unwillingness to make a clear distinction between the Gospel of Christ and the teaching of the Qur'an.

This experience strengthened a conviction which runs throughout the present book: Christians must not allow social pressure, religious pluralism, longstanding tradition, or contemporary opinion to weaken what Scripture plainly teaches. Christ and His Apostles must remain our final authority.

These various experiences may appear at first to concern very different subjects, yet they have continually brought me back to the same issue: What is our final authority? Is it church tradition? Is it

the theological system in which we were raised? Is it the opinion of a pastor or teacher? Is it a claimed personal revelation? Is it an ancient religious writing? Is it a modern political event which is then read back into prophecy? Or is our authority the Word of God given through Christ and His Apostles?

That question is the reason for the present book.

In recent years I became aware of increasing interest among Christians in the Book of Enoch and in the interpretation that the "sons of God" in Genesis 6 were fallen angels who took human women and produced hybrid offspring known as the Nephilim. The fact that 1 Enoch is preserved within the Ethiopian Orthodox biblical tradition is sometimes presented as evidence that it should be regarded as inspired Scripture. Jude and 2 Peter are also used in support of the Watchers interpretation of Genesis 6.

I therefore wanted to examine these claims directly from Scripture.

This led naturally to a wider investigation. If the Book of Enoch is to be received as Scripture, by what authority is such a claim established? How was the New Testament canon recognised? What was the unique authority of the Apostles? Was the canon fundamentally apostolic, or was its authority determined by later church councils?

The study therefore considers apostolic canonization and examines the arguments of Ed Stevens concerning the completion of the New Testament within the apostolic age. It also considers John A. T. Robinson's arguments for the early dating of the New Testament and the significance of the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

From there the same principle is applied to prophecy. The book examines the interpretation of Matthew 24, the statement "this generation," the fig tree, the establishment of the modern State of Israel in 1948, and prophecies in Ezekiel and Isaiah which have frequently been interpreted through modern events.

Throughout all these subjects, I am seeking to maintain one governing principle: Scripture must interpret Scripture. Ancient writings may be studied. Church history may be studied. Christian traditions may be examined. Historical events may be considered. Theological systems may be useful. But none of these possesses the

authority to add to, alter, or redefine what God has revealed through His inspired Word.

After more than fifty years of Christian experience, I am more persuaded than ever of the necessity of returning continually to the Scriptures and asking the simple question:

"What saith the scripture?"

— Romans 4:3

That is the question I invite the reader to ask throughout this book.

INTRODUCTION

This book examines the claims made concerning the Book of Enoch, particularly the teaching that the "sons of God" in Genesis 6 were fallen angels who took human women and produced hybrid offspring.

It also considers the fact that 1 Enoch is included within the Ethiopian Orthodox biblical tradition and asks whether this is sufficient reason to regard the book as inspired Scripture.

The study therefore raises a wider question:

By what authority should Christians determine what is Scripture and how should difficult passages be interpreted?

The argument presented here is that the Christian must begin with Christ, His Apostles, and the inspired Scriptures themselves. Ancient writings, church traditions, theological systems, and historical events may all be examined, but they must remain subordinate to the Word of God.

Particular attention is given to Genesis 6, the meaning of the term Nephilim, Jude and 2 Peter, the nature of angels, the Ethiopian transmission of 1 Enoch, and the question of apostolic canonization.

The study also considers the significance of AD 70 and certain modern interpretations of prophecy, including the identification of the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 with biblical predictions.

These subjects are brought together by one governing principle:

Where Scripture has spoken, we should believe it. Where Scripture has not spoken, we should be careful not to supply human speculation and then treat it as revelation.

The reader is therefore invited to examine the passages for himself and to ask throughout:

What saith the Scripture?

— Romans 4:3

PART ONE—THE BOOK OF ENOCH, GENESIS 6, AND THE WATCHERS

CHAPTER 1—Ancient Tradition and the Word of God

Christ and the Apostolic Foundation

The Christian Church did not begin in the fourth century.

It did not begin with a council, bishop, pope, emperor, or national church.

Christ Himself said:

"I will build my church."

— Matthew 16:18

The Church belongs to Christ.

When Peter confessed:

"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Christ declared that this truth had been revealed by His Father.

The Church is therefore founded upon Christ Himself, the Rock whom Peter confessed.

Paul describes the Church as:

"built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone."

— Ephesians 2:20

Christ appointed His Apostles as His authorised witnesses.

They were not merely later religious teachers expressing personal opinions.

They had been directly commissioned by Him.

They were witnesses of His resurrection.

They received the Holy Ghost.

They were promised divine assistance in remembering and teaching His words.

Jesus said:

"But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."

— John 14:And again: *"Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth."*

— John 16:13

The Apostles therefore occupied a unique and foundational office which later generations could not recreate.

This is central to the question of the canon.

The Church Did Not Create Scripture

The Church did not make an uninspired writing inspired.

Later Christians could preserve apostolic writings.

They could copy them.

They could translate them.

They could defend them.

They could publicly recognise them.

They could produce lists of them.

But they could not confer divine inspiration upon a book which did not already possess it.

This distinction is fundamental.

If a fourth-, fifth-, or sixth-century church received a particular writing, that proves that the church received it.

It does not prove that the Apostles received it.

Those are not the same proposition.

For this reason, the inclusion of 1 Enoch within the Ethiopian biblical tradition cannot by itself establish that it belonged to the apostolic canon.

The Ethiopian Church and the Book of Enoch

Christianity became established in the kingdom of Aksum in Ethiopia during the fourth century.

The classical language of the Ethiopian biblical tradition is Ge'ez.

The translation of the Scriptures into Ge'ez belongs broadly to the formative centuries of Ethiopian Christianity.

This fact establishes an important chronological distinction.

The New Testament Church described in Acts already existed in the first century.

The Apostles were preaching, establishing churches, writing epistles, and exercising their unique authority centuries before Ethiopian Christianity emerged as an organised national Christian

tradition.

Therefore the question cannot be settled merely by saying:

"The Ethiopian Bible contains Enoch."

The question must be:

What authority did the Book of Enoch possess in relation to Christ and His Apostles?

CHAPTER 2— The Historic Enoch and the book Bearing His name.

From What Language Was the Ethiopian Bible Translated?

The ancient Ethiopian Old Testament was translated substantially from the Greek Septuagint, rather than directly from the later Hebrew Masoretic textual tradition.

Thus, in broad terms, the transmission of much of the Old Testament into Ethiopia was:

Hebrew Scripture
→ Greek Septuagint
→ Ge'ez Ethiopian Bible

This becomes important when we examine Genesis 6 and the word translated "giants."

The complete form of the Book of Enoch also survives in Ge'ez, but 1 Enoch was not originally composed in Ge'ez.

Aramaic fragments of substantial portions of Enoch have been discovered among the Dead Sea Scrolls, proving that Enochic literature existed centuries before Christianity reached Ethiopia.

The Ethiopic version appears to belong to a later transmission history in which Greek formed an important intermediary before the work was translated into Ge'ez.

Thus the broad transmission of Enoch was more like:

early Enochic writings represented in Aramaic
→ Greek transmission
→ Ge'ez translation and preservation

This should immediately prevent one misunderstanding.

The Ethiopian Church did not possess an independent Ge'ez manuscript written by the patriarch Enoch himself.

The Ge'ez Book of Enoch belongs to a much later textual transmission.

The Historical Enoch and the Book Bearing His Name

Scripture unquestionably authenticates the historical Enoch.

Genesis tells us:

"And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him."

— Genesis 5:24

Hebrews refers to his translation:

"By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death."

— Hebrews 11:5

And Jude says:

"And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these."

— Jude 14

This must be received without hesitation.

The historical Enoch was a genuine man of God and a genuine prophet.

But another proposition **does not automatically follow**:

The entire work now called the Book of Enoch was therefore written by him and is inspired Scripture.

Jude does not say:

"The whole Book of Enoch is Scripture."

Nor does he say that the seventh man from Adam wrote every section contained in the work later known as 1 Enoch.

A genuine saying of the historical Enoch may have been preserved within a later work without rendering the whole work inspired.

The distinction is essential.

Enoch the prophet is authenticated by Scripture.

The entire later Book of Enoch is not thereby authenticated.

Ancient Does Not Mean Inspired

The discovery of Aramaic fragments of Enoch among the Dead Sea Scrolls proves something important.

It proves that Enochic literature is ancient.

It proves that substantial parts of it circulated within Judaism before Christ.

It does not prove that the work was inspired.

The Qumran community possessed and copied many religious

writings.

The presence of a manuscript within an ancient Jewish library does not automatically make that manuscript canonical Scripture.

We must constantly preserve several distinctions:

Ancient does not necessarily mean inspired.

Religious does not necessarily mean canonical.

Widely read does not necessarily mean apostolic.

Quoted does not necessarily mean wholly endorsed.

These distinctions become especially important when the Book of Enoch is used to interpret Genesis 6.

CHAPTER 3— The Sons of God: Angelic Descent or Human Apostasy

The Watchers and the Daughters of Men

The Book of Enoch contains an elaborate account of heavenly beings called Watchers.

According to the Enochic narrative, these beings descended from heaven, desired human women, took them sexually, and produced gigantic offspring.

The account then expands far beyond anything found in Genesis.

The supposed angels are named.

Their agreements are described.

Their forbidden teachings are listed.

Their offspring are described in extraordinary terms.

Their punishment is explained.

The origin of further evil spirits is also developed within the narrative.

Genesis itself does not say these things.

Genesis says:

"And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them,

That the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose."

— Genesis 6:1–2

The text does not say:

Angels descended from heaven and impregnated human women.

That proposition has to be supplied by interpretation.

Adam, Abel, and Seth

The context of Genesis provides another explanation which remains entirely within human history.

Adam is expressly called:

"the son of God."

— Luke 3:38

Thus the expression "son of God" is not restricted in Scripture to angels.

Adam's son Abel was a righteous worshipper of God.

Cain murdered him:

"Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him."

— Genesis 4:8

After Abel's death, Eve bore Seth and said:

"God… hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew."

— Genesis 4:25

Then we read:

"then began men to call upon the name of the LORD."

— Genesis 4:26

The sequence is therefore entirely human:

Adam, called the son of God
Abel, the righteous worshipper slain by Cain
Seth, appointed in Abel's place
a line of men associated with calling upon the LORD

Then Genesis 6 records the corruption of the sons of God through their marriages with the daughters of men.

Nothing in this sequence requires angel-human reproduction.

The Sin of the Sons of God

Genesis tells us exactly what attracted these men:

"the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair."

They were attracted by what they saw.

Then:

"they took them wives of all which they chose."

The language concerns marriage.

It does not describe rape by supernatural beings.

It does not describe angels manufacturing human bodies.

It describes the sons of God seeing women, desiring them, choosing them, and taking them as wives.

The emphasis upon outward beauty is significant.

The Apostle John later warns concerning:

"the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life."

— 1 John 2:16

We should not claim that John was directly interpreting Genesis 6, but the moral principle is plainly comparable.

The sons of God allowed outward attraction to govern their choice.

The spiritual character of those whom they married ceased to be the controlling consideration.

Marriage With the Ungodly

This pattern appears repeatedly throughout Scripture.

God warned Israel:

"Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son."

— Deuteronomy 7:3

The reason immediately follows:

"For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods."

— Deuteronomy 7:4

The issue was spiritual corruption.

Those who professed the LORD were not to unite themselves in marriage with those who would draw them away from Him.

The same principle appears in the New Testament:

"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers."

— 2 Corinthians 6:14

And concerning Christian marriage:

"she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord."

— 1 Corinthians 7:39

This provides a perfectly intelligible explanation of the corruption described in Genesis 6.

The sons of God chose wives according to outward attraction rather than according to faithfulness to God.

Such marriages contributed to the growing corruption of succeeding generations.

We need not imagine supernatural hybrid children in order to understand how ungodliness increased.

Genesis itself tells us the result:

"And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth."

— Genesis 6:5

The emphasis throughout the passage is upon the corruption of man.

Balaam and the Corruption of God's People

The history of Balaam provides an important biblical parallel.

Balaam was unable to bring the curse upon Israel which Balak desired.

Yet another method was used.

Moses later said:

"Behold, these caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the LORD in the matter of Peor."

— Numbers 31:16

Numbers 25 tells us:

"And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab."

— Numbers 25:1

Then:

"And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods: and

the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods."

— Numbers 25:2

The New Testament confirms the nature of Balaam's counsel. Christ says:

"Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication."

— Revelation 2:14

The lesson is important.

When direct opposition could not overthrow God's people, seduction and ungodly association became instruments of corruption.

Physical attraction led to unlawful union.

Unlawful union led to spiritual compromise.

Spiritual compromise led to idolatry and judgment.

This provides a much more scripturally grounded parallel with Genesis 6 than the theory of angels producing hybrid children.

CHAPTER 4 — The Nephilim, Giants, and Men of Renown

What Does "Nephilim" Mean?

Genesis 6:4 reads in the Authorised Version:

"There were giants in the earth in those days."

But the Hebrew word translated "giants" is:

נְפִילִים — Nephilim

The precise meaning of the term is uncertain.

It has often been connected with the Hebrew root:

נפל — naphal

meaning:

to fall

From this connection have come suggested meanings such as:

fallen ones

or:

those who cause others to fall

However, the precise etymology is not certain enough for us to insist that "fallen ones" is the unquestionable meaning.

The safer course is to retain the Hebrew term Nephilim and

examine how Scripture itself uses it.

This is important because the English word giants already creates a particular mental picture.

The Hebrew word itself does not mean:

"children produced by fallen angels and women."

Scripture never gives that definition.

From Nephilim to "Giants"

The ancient Greek Septuagint translated Nephilim with:

γίγαντες — gigantes

It is from this Greek word that the later English word giant ultimately derives.

Thus the translation history may broadly be represented:

Hebrew:

Nephilim

→Greek Septuagint: gigantes

→English: giants

The English word therefore comes through an ancient Greek interpretation of an obscure Hebrew term.

That does not make the Septuagint wrong.

But it means we must not read all our modern associations with the English word "giant" backwards into the Hebrew text.

The word itself proves neither supernatural parentage nor angelic ancestry.

"Mighty Men" and "Men of Renown"

Genesis 6:4 continues:

"the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown."

The Hebrew word translated mighty men is:

גִּבֹּרִים — gibborim

This is an ordinary Hebrew term for powerful men, warriors, champions, or men of valour.

Genesis therefore describes them as:

"mighty men"

and:

"men of renown."

Whatever the precise significance of Nephilim, the inspired text describes these figures using human terminology.

It does not call them demigods.

It does not call them half-angels.

It does not say that they possessed two different biological natures.

The elaborate supernatural interpretation has to be introduced from elsewhere.

The Nephilim in Numbers 13

The word Nephilim occurs only one other time in the Hebrew Old Testament.

The unbelieving spies reported:

> *"And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight."*
>
> — Numbers 13:33

Again, the Hebrew word translated "giants" is Nephilim.

This creates an important question for the angel-hybrid interpretation.

The Flood had already occurred.

Genesis says:

> *"And all flesh died that moved upon the earth."*
>
> — Genesis 7:21

And:

> *"Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark."*
>
> — Genesis 7:23

If the pre-Flood Nephilim were a special biological race created through angel-human intercourse, how did Nephilim appear again after the Flood?

Various theories have been proposed.

Some suggest another descent of angels.

Others suggest that Nephilim ancestry passed through the wives of Noah's sons.

Others propose different forms of supernatural survival.

The problem is that Scripture states none of these things.

These explanations are additional theories created to solve a difficulty produced by the original theory.

The simpler explanation is that the term Nephilim itself does not mean "angel-human hybrid."

The Spies Were Speaking in Fear

The context of Numbers 13 must also be remembered.

The spies were discouraging Israel from entering the land.

They said:

"The land, through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof."

— Numbers 13:32

Then:

"we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight."

This is plainly the language of fear and exaggeration.

The inspired record truthfully records what the spies said.

That does not mean their frightened description must be treated as a technical statement defining the biological nature of the inhabitants of Canaan.

They were magnifying the danger and discouraging Israel.

We should therefore be extremely cautious about constructing an elaborate supernatural doctrine from the language of unbelieving spies.

The Anakim Were Men

The Anakim later appear in ordinary human warfare.

Joshua records:

"And at that time came Joshua, and cut off the Anakims from the mountains."

— Joshua 11:21

And:

"There was none of the Anakims left in the land of the children of Israel: only in Gaza, in Gath, and in Ashdod, there remained."

— Joshua 11:22

They occupied identifiable places.

They could be fought.

They could be defeated.

They could be driven from territory.

Nothing in these passages describes them as supernatural hybrids.

They belong to human history.

This strongly suggests that the term Nephilim should not automatically be converted into the name of an angel-human species.

"And Also After That"

Genesis 6:4 says:

"There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that…"

Some interpret "after that" as meaning:

after the Flood.

But the text does not say:

"after the Flood."

The phrase may simply describe the continuing period before the Flood while the marriages and corruption already mentioned were taking place.

John Gill understood the passage in this way.

There is therefore no necessity to invent a second post-Flood descent of angels in order to explain the words.

CHAPTER 5 — Can Angels Mate With Women?

John Gill on Genesis 6

John Gill expressly rejected the interpretation that the sons of God were angels.

He stated that they were:

"not angels either good or bad"

because angels are spiritual beings who do not marry or "generate and be generated."

Gill understood the sons of God as the posterity of Seth and the professing people of God.

He likewise rejected the idea that the Nephilim were angel-human hybrids.

He considered explanations connected with violence, oppression, fear, apostasy, and falling from the true worship of God.

Whatever precise meaning is attached to Nephilim, Gill's interpretation remains within human history.

This is consistent with the immediate context:

"mighty men"

and:

"men of renown."

Angels Are Not a Reproductive Race

Scripture describes angels as:

"ministering spirits."

— Hebrews 1:14

Mankind, by contrast, was expressly created:

"male and female."

— Genesis 1:27

Human beings were commanded:

"Be fruitful, and multiply."

— Genesis 1:28

Reproduction belongs to the created order given to mankind.

No corresponding reproductive command is ever given to angels.

Christ says:

"For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven."

— Matthew 22:30

There is no biblical teaching that angels form a reproductive race parallel to humanity.

There is no biblical teaching that fallen angels suddenly acquire powers of sexual generation which obedient angels do not possess.

There is no biblical teaching that spiritual beings biologically father human children.

If someone maintains such a doctrine, the burden rests upon him to demonstrate it from Scripture.

The Book of Enoch cannot first be used to establish the doctrine and then the doctrine used to authenticate the Book of Enoch.

That is circular reasoning.

Jude Does Not Teach Angel-Human Intercourse

Jude says:

"And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day."

— Jude 6

This proves that angels sinned.

It proves that they departed from their first estate.

It proves that they were judged.

It does not say that they married women.

Jude then speaks of Sodom and Gomorrha.

Some have attempted to link the sexual sins of Sodom with the preceding angelic rebellion.

But the passage does not require us to conclude that the angels committed the identical sin of Sodom.

Jude gives successive examples of rebellion followed by judgment.

Unbelieving Israelites were judged.

Fallen angels were judged.

Sodom and Gomorrha were judged.

The common subject is the certainty of divine judgment upon apostasy and wickedness.

Peter Does Not Teach It Either

Peter writes:

"For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment;

And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person…"

— 2 Peter 2:4–5

The proximity of the angels and Noah is sometimes treated as proof that Peter is describing the supposed Watchers of Genesis 6.

But Peter continues:

"And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes…"

— 2 Peter 2:6

Peter is presenting successive examples of divine judgment:

angels that sinned
the old world
Sodom and Gomorrha

His conclusion appears in verse 9:

"The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished."

Peter never states that the angels of verse 4 were the sons of God of Genesis 6.

He never states that their sin consisted of sexual intercourse with women.

Again, these connections have to be supplied by an external interpretation.

CHAPTER 6 — When Speculation Becomes Religious Fable
Filling the Gaps With Fabulous Stories

Here we encounter a wider danger.

Human curiosity dislikes silence.

Where Scripture supplies little information, men naturally desire more.

A short biblical statement becomes surrounded by speculation.

Speculation becomes tradition.

Tradition is repeated.

Repetition creates familiarity.

Familiarity eventually creates the appearance of fact.

At that point Christians may forget where Scripture ends and human imagination begins.

This danger appears in many areas of religious history.

Stories developed concerning the Apostle John which Scripture never records.

One tradition says that he was plunged into boiling oil.

Another says that he fled from a bath-house because a heretic entered and he feared that the building would collapse under divine judgment.

Whatever historical value may attach to such traditions, they are not apostolic Scripture.

They illustrate how easily religious narratives grow around biblical figures.

The same caution is necessary when Enoch supplies page after page of supernatural detail where Genesis supplies only a few verses.

The Clay Birds of the Child Jesus

Another striking example concerns stories about the childhood of Jesus.

A later tradition developed in which the child Jesus formed birds from clay and caused them to live.

That account does not appear in Matthew.

It does not appear in Mark.

It does not appear in Luke.

It does not appear in John.

It belongs to later infancy traditions and appears again centuries later in the Qur'an.

The presence of such a story in a religious writing does not require the Christian to receive it.

Why?

Because it possesses no apostolic authority.

Christ's Apostles did not deliver it as part of the Gospel.

This gives us a useful principle.

If we reject later stories about Jesus which have no apostolic warrant, consistency requires us to exercise the same caution concerning later stories about angels.

A later writing does not become authoritative merely because it fills a gap left by Scripture.

My view

The Watchers story appears to be a later attempt to explain Genesis 6 by imagination rather than by revelation. Someone, or perhaps a developing Jewish tradition, looked back at the brief and difficult account of the "sons of God," the "daughters of men," and the Nephilim, and supplied details which Genesis itself does not give. Fallen angels were introduced, their descent was described, their sexual relations with women were asserted, and hybrid offspring were imagined. In this sense the story may reasonably be regarded as a Jewish fable, an interpretive expansion created to fill what Scripture

had left unexplained.

The weakness of the idea can be exposed by ridicule. If fallen male angels could take human women and produce hybrid children, why should one not invent the reverse story: fallen female angels descend, take human husbands, and give birth to angelic or hybrid children or give birth to cherums? Scripture teaches neither. The absurdity of the second story helps expose the unsupported nature of the first.

The lesson is broader than Enoch. When Scripture is obscure, we must not fill its silence with imagination and then allow that imagination to become doctrine. It is better to say that God has not revealed a matter than to construct a fabulous explanation and later treat it as though it came from God.

This reminds me of a danger from an experience early in my Christian life. A pastor announced to the congregation that the Lord had told him to purchase a bungalow, and he regarded the immediate acceptance of a reduced offer as confirmation of the Lord's will. Some weeks later, after examining restrictive covenants connected with the property, he announced that the Lord had told him not to purchase it. It appeared to me that the Lord had no more directly told him to buy the property than He had later told him not to buy it. Rather, he had interpreted changing circumstances and personal judgments as though they were divine revelation. The danger is obvious. A Christian may make a prudent judgment, change his mind when further information appears, and recognise God's providence in the whole matter. But he should be very cautious before saying, "The Lord told me," when Scripture has not spoken. Otherwise human reasoning is given an authority which belongs only to the Word of God.

We Must Not Go Beyond What Is Written

The Christian should not regard all such speculation as harmless.

There comes a point where it dishonours Scripture.

It implies that God's revelation is insufficient and requires enlargement by human tradition.

Paul writes:

"that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which

is written."

— 1 Corinthians 4:6

The honourable treatment of Scripture is therefore not to fill every silence with speculation.

It is to respect the silence.

Where God has spoken, we believe.

Where God has not spoken, we must be careful not to speak with divine certainty.

The Ethiopian Canon Does Not Settle the Question

We may therefore make the following concessions without surrendering the argument.

The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church does include 1 Enoch within its canon.

Ethiopian Christianity is ancient.

The Ethiopian Church preserved the complete text of Enoch.

Enochic writings existed before Christ.

These things are true.

But none of them proves that the Apostles received the entire Book of Enoch as inspired Scripture.

No apostolic text says that they did.

Jude's preservation of a genuine prophecy of Enoch does not authenticate the whole later composite work bearing his name.

The Ethiopian tradition proves Ethiopian reception.

It does not rewrite first-century apostolic history.

The Error of Making Tradition Equal to Revelation

Without an objective apostolic boundary, Christianity becomes vulnerable to an endless succession of claimed revelations.

One church may add Enoch.

Another movement may add new prophets.

Another religion may add stories about Jesus.

Another movement may claim new visions.

Another may interpret Scripture through contemporary political events.

The principle is the same whenever human material is added to divine revelation and then treated as though both possess equal authority.

That practice must be resisted.

Later writings may be historically valuable.

They may illuminate ancient beliefs.

They may preserve traditions.

They may even contain truths.

But the Christian must always ask:

What authority has God given us for receiving this as His Word?

A Call Back to Scripture

Christians ought therefore to exercise much greater care concerning these matters.

It is not sound interpretation to take a few difficult verses and surround them with spectacular stories which God has not revealed.

It is not sound interpretation to take an apocryphal narrative and read it backwards into Moses, Jude, and Peter.

It is not honouring Scripture to treat speculation as revelation.

The proper method is the opposite.

Let Genesis speak for Genesis.

Let Numbers speak for Numbers.

Let Jude speak for Jude.

Let Peter speak for Peter.

Let Christ and His Apostles define the faith delivered to the Church.

And let later writings, however ancient or fascinating, remain subordinate to the Word of God.

Conclusion

The Book of Enoch deserves study as an important ancient Jewish religious work.

Its survival is historically significant.

Its preservation within Ethiopia is of considerable value.

It helps us understand ideas circulating in some sections of Judaism before and around the beginning of the Christian era.

But historical importance is not the same thing as divine inspiration.

The historical Enoch was a genuine prophet.

Jude establishes that fact.

What Jude does not establish is that every part of the later

composite work called 1 Enoch was written by that patriarch or received by the Apostles as Scripture.

A compact conclusion for the book

You could summarise the whole matter this way:

The work known as 1 Enoch is not a single book which can historically be traced to Enoch, the seventh from Adam. It is a composite collection of Jewish apocalyptic writings composed and edited over a considerable period during the centuries before Christ. Its authors are unknown. The Old Testament records the historical Enoch but nowhere identifies or predicts a canonical book written by him. The Watchers narrative itself is widely recognised by scholars as a later interpretation and expansion of Genesis 6:1–4. It supplies names, events and supernatural details which Genesis does not contain. Therefore the statement "Enoch explains Genesis 6" assumes what first needs to be proved. Historically, it is more accurate to say that later Jewish writers interpreted Genesis 6 through an Enochic story. The Christian must then test that interpretation by the inspired Scriptures rather than allowing the later narrative to determine what Genesis means.

The particular doctrine concerning Watchers mating with women also goes far beyond anything plainly stated in Genesis, Jude, or Peter.

Genesis presents a coherent human history.

Adam is called the son of God.

Abel was righteous and was murdered by Cain.

Seth was appointed in Abel's place.

Men began to call upon the name of the LORD.

The sons of God later saw the daughters of men, were attracted by their outward beauty, and took wives according to their own choice.

The biblical pattern repeatedly warns against such unions with those who do not follow the Lord.

The history of Balaam demonstrates how sensual attraction and ungodly association can become instruments of spiritual corruption.

Human wickedness subsequently became great upon the earth.

The Nephilim need not be understood as supernatural hybrids.

The original Hebrew word is Nephilim.

The Septuagint rendered it gigantes.

English translators subsequently used the word "giants."

The same Hebrew term appears again in Numbers 13 concerning the sons of Anak, who belong to ordinary human history and could later be fought and defeated.

Scripture never defines Nephilim as angel-human offspring.

The theory requires information supplied from outside Scripture.

The Christian should therefore resist the temptation to elevate ancient speculation into divine revelation.

The Church is founded upon Christ and the apostolic witness He authorised.

Later churches may preserve ancient writings, **but they cannot confer apostolic inspiration upon them.**

We honour Scripture not by adding to it, but by submitting to it.

And where Scripture has not spoken, reverence requires us to say:

God has not revealed this, and we have no authority to invent it.

CHAPTER 7 — The Canon Came From God

PART TWO—Apostoic Canonization And The Authority Of The New Testament

The question of how the New Testament canon was formed is of fundamental importance.

Christians generally agree that the twenty-seven books of the New Testament are inspired and authoritative for doctrine and practice. But another question naturally follows:

- By what authority were these writings recognised as Scripture?

Was the canon determined centuries later by councils and bishops?

Or was its authority already established within the apostolic age itself?

The position examined in this study is that the authority to produce, recognise, and certify inspired Scripture belonged uniquely to Christ and to those whom He appointed as His Apostles and prophets.

This view is sometimes described as apostolic canonization.

It maintains that the canon did not receive its authority from a

later church.

Rather, the writings themselves possessed divine authority because they arose within the inspired apostolic ministry established by Christ.

Later churches could recognise that authority.

They could preserve the books.

They could copy them.

They could translate them.

They could defend them.

But they could not make them inspired.

This distinction is central to the whole question.

The Church did not create Scripture.

The Holy Ghost inspired it.

Paul writes:

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God."

— 2 Timothy 3:16

The source of Scripture is therefore God.

Its authority does not arise because a later ecclesiastical body voted to accept it.

Rather, the Church receives Scripture because God has given it.

This means that the fundamental question concerning the canon is not:

Which later council gave these books authority?

It is:

- Which writings were given by God through His authorised prophets and Apostles?

The distinction is important because if the Church possesses the power to make a writing inspired merely by recognising it, then inspiration ultimately depends upon ecclesiastical authority.

But if inspiration originates with God, then the role of the Church is fundamentally one of recognition and preservation, not creation.

The Unique Office of the Apostles

The Apostles occupied an office which later Christian leaders did not possess.

They were witnesses of the risen Christ.

They had been directly appointed by Him.

They were commissioned to speak in His name.

They received the Holy Ghost in a unique foundational capacity.

Jesus said to them:

"But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak.

For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you."

— Matthew 10:19–20

And:

"But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."

— John 14:26

And again:

"Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth."

— John 16:13

These promises were not given indiscriminately to every Christian teacher in every later generation.

They belonged especially to those whom Christ commissioned as His foundational witnesses.

This is why Paul describes the Church as:

"built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone."

— Ephesians 2:20

A foundation is laid once.

It is not continually relaid in every generation.

This strongly supports the conclusion that the revelatory authority of the Apostles belonged to the foundational period of the Church.

Christ, the Prophet Like Moses

The Old Testament had already prepared the way for the unique

authority of Christ.

Moses declared:

"I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him."

— Deuteronomy 18:18

Peter expressly applied this prophecy to Christ:

"For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you."

— Acts 3:22

The Father Himself testified concerning Christ at the Transfiguration:

"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him."

— Matthew 17:5

Christ therefore stands as the supreme Prophet.

Moses delivered the Word of God orally and in writing.

Christ Himself did not leave behind a written Gospel in His own hand. Instead, He appointed Apostles and prophets and promised them the Holy Ghost to preserve and communicate His teaching.

The written New Testament therefore belongs to the authorised witness of Christ's appointed representatives.

Christ Prepared His Apostles for an Authoritative Witness

The Apostles were not left to depend upon fallible memory alone.

Christ promised:

"he shall… bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."

— John 14:26

This is of great importance.

The Gospel record was not intended to rest merely upon the uncertain recollection of elderly men writing many decades later.

Christ promised divine assistance.

Likewise, He promised:

"he will guide you into all truth."

— John 16:13

The apostolic witness was therefore both historical and revelatory.

They had seen and heard Christ.

The Holy Ghost then enabled them to understand, remember, proclaim, and preserve the truth concerning Him.

This provides the theological basis for an authoritative written apostolic testimony.

The Great Commission and Apostolic Authority

Immediately before His ascension, Christ said:

"All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth."

— Matthew 28:18

He then commanded:

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations…

Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you."

— Matthew 28:19–20

The Apostles therefore did not teach on their own authority.

Their authority was derived from Christ.

He possessed all authority.

They were His commissioned representatives.

Their task was not to create a new religion of their own invention.

It was to teach what Christ had commanded.

This commission naturally included both oral preaching and the preservation of apostolic teaching in writing.

The authority of the New Testament therefore rests ultimately upon Christ Himself.

Peter and the Keys of the Kingdom

Christ gave Peter a particularly important commission:

"And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

— Matthew 16:19

This establishes Peter as possessing extraordinary authority

within the foundational Church.

We should, however, be careful not to claim more than the passage itself states.

Matthew 16 does not explicitly say:

Peter was appointed to compile and certify the twenty-seven-book New Testament canon.

That would be an inference.

What the passage clearly establishes is that Peter possessed a unique authority under Christ in connection with the government and establishment of the Kingdom.

The argument for apostolic canonization therefore should not depend upon Matthew 16 alone.

It rests upon the wider apostolic commission, inspiration, prophetic authority, and the evidence that apostolic writings were already being recognised as Scripture during the apostolic age.

This distinction strengthens rather than weakens the case.

CHAPTER 8—The Apostolic Foundation and a Closed Canon

Apostolic Authority Was Not Perpetually Transferred

This raises another important question.

Was the unique authority of the Apostles transferred in its entirety to later bishops?

If so, one might reasonably ask why inspiration did not continue with it.

If later bishops possessed the same authority as Peter, Paul, and John, then logically they might also claim the same power to receive new revelation and produce new Scripture.

But historic Protestant theology has generally rejected such a conclusion.

The Apostles were unique.

They were foundational.

They were eyewitnesses.

They were directly commissioned.

The revelatory office did not continue indefinitely.

When the apostolic generation passed from the earthly scene, the authority to produce new Scripture passed with it.

This provides the theological basis for a closed canon.

The Danger of an Open Canon

If inspiration and apostolic authority continued indefinitely through ecclesiastical succession, the canon could never be regarded as finally closed.

New revelations could always be added.

New prophets could arise.

New books could be declared inspired.

History provides many examples of movements claiming precisely this.

The Book of Mormon is an obvious example of a later work presented as additional revelation.

Other religious movements have claimed new prophets, visions, scriptures, or messages from God.

The principle of a closed apostolic canon therefore protects the Church not only from Roman claims concerning continuing ecclesiastical authority but also from later Protestant, sectarian, and non-Christian claims to fresh revelation.

The question is always:

Does this writing belong to the foundational prophetic and apostolic revelation given through Christ's appointed witnesses?

If not, it cannot possess the authority of canonical Scripture.

The Faith Once Delivered

Jude writes:

> *"Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."*
>
> — Jude 3

The expression:

"once delivered"

is significant.

The faith was not to be continually reconstructed by new generations of prophets.

It had been decisively delivered.

The Church's task was therefore to contend for what had already been given.

This accords naturally with the concept of a completed apostolic revelation.

We should again be precise.

Jude 3 does not directly say:

"all twenty-seven books of the New Testament had already been collected into a single volume."

But it does establish the theological principle that the Christian faith was a definite body of truth already delivered to the saints.

That principle strongly accords with a closed apostolic deposit.

CHAPTER 9—Scripture Recognised Within the Apostolic Age

Apostolic Writings Were Already Being Recognised as Scripture

The New Testament itself provides evidence that inspired writings were recognised as Scripture during the apostolic age.

Peter writes concerning Paul:

> *"Even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you;*
>
> *As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction."*
>
> — 2 Peter 3:15–16

This is extremely significant.

Peter refers to Paul's epistles and compares the twisting of them with the twisting of:

> "the other scriptures."

This provides direct evidence that Paul's writings were already being regarded within the category of Scripture while Apostles were still living.

Canonical recognition therefore did not begin in the fourth century.

It had already begun within the apostolic age itself.

Paul Also Recognises Written Gospel Material

Another important passage appears in Paul's first epistle to Timothy:

"For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward."

— 1 Timothy 5:18

The first statement comes from Deuteronomy 25:4.

The second corresponds closely with the words recorded in Luke:

"the labourer is worthy of his hire."

— Luke 10:7

If Paul is here placing this Gospel saying under the designation: "the scripture saith,"

then we possess another indication that Christian written material was already being treated as Scripture during the apostolic period.

This deserves attention because it shows that the recognition of new covenant Scripture was not merely a later ecclesiastical process.

It was already occurring while Apostles were alive.

Paul Expected His Letters to Be Read Publicly

Paul also expected his writings to circulate among the churches.

He commanded the Thessalonians:

"I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren."

— 1 Thessalonians 5:27

To the Colossians he wrote:

"And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea."

— Colossians 4:16

The apostolic letters were therefore not merely private correspondence.

They were written for churches.

They were publicly read.

They were exchanged.

They circulated.

This provides an obvious mechanism by which collections of apostolic writings could begin to form during the lifetime of the

Apostles themselves.

Revelation Also Expected Immediate Circulation

The book of Revelation similarly begins:

"Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy."

— Revelation 1:3

And the book is addressed to:

"the seven churches which are in Asia."

— Revelation 1:4

The book therefore assumed public reading and circulation from the beginning.

This again demonstrates that New Testament writings were not hidden documents rediscovered centuries later.

They were produced for churches and circulated within the Christian community.

Apostolic and Prophetic Writers

Not every New Testament book was written by one of the original Twelve.

Paul was directly commissioned by the risen Christ.

James and Jude belonged to the earliest Jerusalem Church and were closely connected with the Lord and His Apostles.

Mark and Luke were associated with the apostolic circle.

Luke was closely associated with Paul.

Mark was closely associated with Peter and other Apostles.

The authority of the New Testament therefore cannot be reduced simply to the question:

Was the author one of the Twelve?

The wider category is apostolic and prophetic authority within the foundational Church.

Paul writes concerning the mystery of Christ:

"Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit."

— Ephesians 3:5

Thus the foundational revelation involved:

"apostles and prophets."

This provides a broader biblical framework for understanding writings produced within the apostolic circle.

Writing, Circulation, Recognition

The argument for apostolic canonization can therefore be considered under three related headings.

Writing

Inspired writings were produced by Apostles and prophets or within the authorised apostolic circle.

Circulation

Those writings were read publicly, copied, exchanged, and transmitted among the churches.

Recognition

Their divine authority was recognised while apostolic authority was still functioning.

The New Testament clearly gives evidence for all three processes.

What requires further historical examination is the stronger claim that all twenty-seven books had been assembled into one formally completed and certified collection before AD 70.

That is a more specific historical thesis.

It should not be confused with the broader and much more readily demonstrated truth that New Testament writings were being written, circulated, and recognised as Scripture within the apostolic age.

CHAPTER 10—Ed Stevens and the Case for Apostolic Canonization

The Strong and the Stronger Claim

This distinction is important.

There are really two claims.

The first is:

The authority of New Testament Scripture derives from Christ and His inspired Apostles and prophets, not from later church councils.

This claim has strong biblical support.

The second is:

All twenty-seven New Testament books were written, collected into a completed corpus, and formally certified before AD 70.

That is the stronger historical claim associated particularly with writers such as Ed Stevens.

It may be argued.

But it requires historical demonstration.

The first claim does not depend entirely upon proving every detail of the second.

This distinction allows us to examine Stevens' argument sympathetically without making the authority of Scripture depend upon every chronological reconstruction he proposes.

Apostolic Canonization and Ed Stevens

Ed Stevens has argued that the entire New Testament canon was completed under apostolic oversight before the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

His position is more specific than the general Protestant doctrine that the canon belongs to the apostolic age.

Stevens contends that three processes were completed before the Apostles passed from the scene:

- the writings were produced;
- they were collected;
- and they were certified.

His concern is understandable.

If the Church had to wait centuries after the death of every Apostle before knowing which books belonged to Scripture, the final determination of the canon might appear to depend upon uninspired men.

Stevens therefore argues that the same inspired generation which produced the writings also possessed the authority necessary to recognise and certify them.

The theological logic has considerable force.

The historical question is whether the surviving evidence allows

us to demonstrate the entire process as precisely as Stevens maintains.

That question must be examined separately.

The Significance of AD 70

Stevens attaches particular importance to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

From a preterist perspective, that event marked the conclusion of the Old Covenant age and the fulfilment of Christ's judgment prophecies concerning Jerusalem.

Christ had said:

> *"There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down."*
>
> — Matthew 24:2

And:

> *"Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled."*
>
> — Matthew 24:34

If the destruction of Jerusalem marked the decisive close of that covenantal age, Stevens reasons that the apostolic revelatory work should likewise have been completed within that period.

This provides a theological framework for his pre-AD 70 canon thesis.

But again, theological fittingness is not by itself historical proof.

We must still ask:

Were all the New Testament books actually written by then?

Were they all circulating by then?

Were they all gathered into a recognised corpus?

And is there evidence that the Apostles themselves certified that complete corpus?

These questions form the next stage of the investigation.

"The End of the Age"

Christ said:

> *"and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."*
>
> — Matthew 28:20

The Greek expression translated "world" can carry the sense of

age.

From a preterist perspective, the phrase may be understood as referring to the conclusion of the Jewish covenantal age culminating in AD 70.

Matthew 24:3 contains similar language when the disciples ask concerning:

.....

"the end of the world."

If this interpretation is correct, Christ's promise to remain with His commissioned messengers until the end of the age can naturally be associated with their first-century mission.

Nevertheless, we should avoid making the entire case for apostolic canonization depend upon this interpretation alone.

Matthew 28:20 does not explicitly speak of the closing of the biblical canon.

Its relevance is theological and contextual.

It belongs within a cumulative argument.

The Gospel Preached Throughout Their World

The New Testament contains remarkable statements concerning the extent of the apostolic mission.

Paul writes:

"Their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world."

— Romans 10:18

He speaks of the Gospel:

"which was preached to every creature which is under heaven."

— Colossians 1:23

And:

"which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit."

— Colossians 1:6

Romans likewise speaks of the Gospel as:

"made known to all nations for the obedience of faith."

— Romans 16:26

These statements should be understood according to the biblical usage of their own historical world rather than necessarily as geographical claims concerning every individual inhabitant of the modern globe.

Nevertheless, they show that the New Testament writers regarded the apostolic Gospel mission as already reaching its appointed extent during their lifetime.

This accords naturally with the idea of a first-century completion of the foundational mission.

The Canon Closed With the Apostolic Age

Whatever precise date we assign to every New Testament book, the theological boundary remains the apostolic age.

Once the Apostles and inspired prophets passed from the earthly scene, the foundational revelatory office ceased.

No succeeding bishop possessed authority to produce another Gospel.

No council could add another apostolic epistle.

No pope could produce a new book of Scripture.

No later prophet could reopen revelation.

No later church could transform an ancient religious writing into apostolic Scripture.

The foundation had been laid.

The faith had been delivered.

The Church's responsibility thereafter was to preserve and contend for that revelation.

This is the central significance of apostolic canonization.

What This Means for the Book of Enoch

The relevance to the Book of Enoch is direct.

Even if 1 Enoch is ancient, the decisive question remains:

Was it received as part of the authoritative prophetic and apostolic revelation of the Church?

Jude's quotation establishes that the historical Enoch genuinely prophesied.

It does not establish that the entire composite work now called 1 Enoch was received as Scripture by the Apostles.

Later Ethiopian reception cannot retrospectively supply apostolic authority.

Neither can antiquity.

Neither can the discovery of ancient manuscripts.

Neither can the fact that some early Christians valued the work.

The authority of Scripture rests upon God's revelation, given through those whom He appointed.

That is the standard by which later claims must be judged.

Conclusion

The doctrine of apostolic canonization rests upon several interconnected truths.

Christ possesses all authority.

He is the Prophet like Moses.

He appointed the Apostles as His foundational witnesses.

He promised them the Holy Ghost.

The Spirit would bring Christ's words to their remembrance and guide them into truth.

The Apostles preached, taught, wrote, and circulated authoritative instruction among the churches.

Their writings were already being recognised as Scripture during their lifetime.

Paul's letters circulated among congregations.

Peter referred to Paul's writings alongside "the other scriptures."

The faith was spoken of as having been once delivered to the saints.

These facts provide strong biblical support for the conclusion that the authority of the New Testament canon belongs fundamentally to the apostolic age rather than to later ecclesiastical councils.

A stronger historical claim is made by Ed Stevens: that all twenty-seven books were not only written but also collected and certified before AD 70.

That claim deserves careful examination.

It should neither be dismissed without investigation nor accepted merely because it accords with a preterist understanding of the close of the Jewish age.

The next question must therefore be historical and chronological:

Were all twenty-seven books of the New Testament actually written before AD 70?

Only after that question has been examined can we move to the

still more demanding question of whether the complete corpus was collected and certified within the lifetime of the Apostles.

PART THREE—WERE ALL THE NEW TESTAMENT BOOKS WRITTEN BEFORE AD 70?

The Chronological Question Behind Apostolic Canonization

If the New Testament canon was completed under living apostolic authority, one major chronological question must first be addressed:

Were all twenty-seven books of the New Testament written before the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70?

This question is fundamental to the particular form of apostolic canonization argued by Ed Stevens.

The broader doctrine of apostolic authority does not require every book to be dated before AD 70. It requires the writings to belong to the apostolic and prophetic foundation established by Christ.

Stevens, however, advances a more specific claim.

He argues that the books of the New Testament were not only written during the apostolic age, but were also collected and certified before the destruction of Jerusalem.

If that argument is to succeed, the first requirement is chronological:

Every New Testament book must be capable of being placed within the pre-AD 70 period.

The evidence should therefore be examined book by book.

CHAPTER 11—The Gospels, Acts, and the Apostolic Epistles

The Synoptic Gospels and Acts

A pre-AD 70 date for Matthew, Mark, Luke, and Acts is entirely possible.

The book of Acts is particularly important because its ending appears remarkably unfinished if it was written long after the events it records.

Acts concludes with Paul alive in Rome:

> *"And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him."*
>
> — Acts 28:30

The narrative says nothing concerning:

the conclusion of Paul's legal case,
his possible release,
any later ministry,
the Neronic persecution,
Paul's death,
Peter's death,
or the destruction of Jerusalem.

This silence has often been considered significant.

If Acts were written after these events, especially after the death of its principal missionary figure, one might expect at least some indication of what happened to him.

The absence of such information does not prove an early date beyond question, but it provides a reasonable basis for placing Acts during Paul's lifetime, commonly around the early AD 60s.

If Acts was written then, Luke's Gospel must be earlier, because Acts begins by referring to Luke's previous work:

> *"The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach."*
>
> — Acts 1:1

Thus:

Luke precedes Acts.

And if Acts belongs to the early 60s, Luke must belong before that.

Luke Was Not the First Gospel Tradition

Luke himself says:

> *"Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us…"*
>
> — Luke 1:1

This is significant.

Luke was not writing in a literary vacuum.

He knew that other accounts of Christ's life and ministry were already in circulation.

This demonstrates that Gospel material had already been committed to writing before Luke composed his own account.

Luke continues:

"Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word."

— Luke 1:2

His work therefore belongs within a living chain of eyewitness testimony and written Gospel tradition.

The exact literary relationship between Matthew, Mark, and Luke remains debated, but nothing in Luke's introduction requires a late first-century setting.

Indeed, it fits naturally within the living apostolic period.

Matthew and Mark

If Luke and Acts belong before AD 70, Matthew and Mark can also reasonably be placed within the same broad period.

The three Synoptic Gospels contain substantial overlapping material.

Whatever theory is adopted concerning their literary relationship, the existence of shared Gospel tradition before Luke means that written accounts concerning Christ were already available during the apostolic age.

The important point for the present study is not to establish an exact year for each Gospel.

It is that there is no necessity within the texts themselves to place Matthew or Mark after AD 70.

The prediction of Jerusalem's destruction does not require a post-AD 70 date unless one first assumes that genuine prophecy is impossible.

Christ's prediction:

"There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down."

— Matthew 24:2

cannot legitimately be treated as proof of late composition merely because the event subsequently occurred.

If Christ genuinely prophesied the destruction of Jerusalem, the prediction is entirely compatible with a pre-AD 70 Gospel.

The Pauline Epistles

The Pauline writings present considerably less chronological difficulty.

Paul was unquestionably active during the middle decades of the first century.

His letters belong within his lifetime.

Therefore writings genuinely authored by Paul must predate his death and consequently belong before AD 70.

This includes the principal Pauline epistles:

Romans,
1 and 2 Corinthians,
Galatians,
1 and 2 Thessalonians,
Philippians,
Colossians,
Philemon,
Ephesians,
and the Pastoral Epistles if traditional Pauline authorship is accepted.

The precise date assigned to each letter may be debated, but their general placement within the apostolic age is secure within the argument presented here.

Hebrews

Hebrews is more complicated because its authorship has long been disputed.

The present argument does not need to settle whether Paul personally wrote Hebrews.

The more important question is whether the epistle itself fits naturally before AD 70.

Its discussion of priesthood, sacrifice, covenant, and sanctuary repeatedly speaks in a manner which appears to presuppose the continuing operation of the Levitical system.

The writer says:

"For there are priests that offer gifts according to the law."

— Hebrews 8:4

And again:

"And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering

oftentimes the same sacrifices…"

— Hebrews 10:11

This language is notable.

The writer is arguing that the old covenant order is passing away and that Christ's priesthood is superior.

If the Jerusalem temple had already been destroyed and the sacrificial system had already ceased, that extraordinary event might have supplied a powerful historical confirmation of the argument.

Yet Hebrews never says:

the temple has now been destroyed,

or:

the sacrifices have now ceased.

Instead, the old order is spoken of as:

"ready to vanish away."

— Hebrews 8:13

That expression is naturally compatible with a date before AD 70.

It does not prove such a date with mathematical certainty, but it gives serious support to it.

James

The Epistle of James likewise fits comfortably within the pre-AD 70 period if its author is James, the brother of the Lord.

James was an important figure in the Jerusalem church.

Acts records his leadership.

Paul refers to him.

The present draft follows the traditional identification of the author with James the Lord's brother and therefore places the epistle before his death.

This presents no difficulty for a pre-AD 70 chronology.

Peter

The two epistles of Peter likewise belong naturally within the apostolic period if traditional Petrine authorship is accepted.

Peter writes as:

"an apostle of Jesus Christ."

— 1 Peter 1:1

And in the second epistle identifies himself as:

"Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ."

— 2 Peter 1:1

He also refers to his coming death:

"Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me."

— 2 Peter 1:14

If Peter died during the Neronic period, his writings necessarily precede AD 70.

Again, this presents no serious difficulty for the early-date position.

Jude

Jude also fits naturally within the same broad period.

Its literary relationship with 2 Peter is obvious enough that the two documents belong to closely related theological and historical circumstances.

Both warn concerning corrupt teachers.

Both appeal to examples of divine judgment.

Both use similar language and themes.

This does not by itself establish an exact date or literary dependence in one direction rather than the other.

But nothing in Jude requires a post-AD 70 setting.

It can readily be placed within the apostolic period.

CHAPTER 12—The Main Difficulty: The Johannine Writings

At this point the chronological case appears comparatively straightforward.

The Synoptic Gospels,
Acts,
Paul's letters,
James,
Peter,
Jude,
and probably Hebrews
can all reasonably be placed before AD 70.

The major difficulty concerns the writings attributed to John:
the Gospel of John,

1 John,
2 John,
3 John,
and Revelation.

The traditional chronology places John well beyond AD 70 and frequently dates Revelation near the end of the first century.

If that chronology is correct, the strongest form of Stevens' theory becomes difficult to maintain.

This is why the Johannine question occupies such an important place in his argument.

The Traditional View of John

A widely received Christian tradition holds that the Apostle John survived the destruction of Jerusalem and lived into the later first century.

According to this chronology, his Gospel and epistles may have been written well after AD 70.

Revelation is commonly dated either during the reign of Nero or during the reign of Domitian, with the latter date often placed around the mid-AD 90s.

Stevens challenges this traditional reconstruction.

His theory requires the Johannine writings to belong to the earlier apostolic period.

He therefore considers whether John may have died considerably earlier than the later tradition suggests.

This is one of the most controversial parts of his reconstruction and must be treated as such.

James and John Drinking Christ's Cup

Stevens begins with Christ's words to James and John.

Their mother requested that her sons might occupy positions of honour in Christ's kingdom.

Jesus replied:

"Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of…?"

— Matthew 20:22

They answered that they were able.

Christ then said:

"Ye shall drink indeed of my cup."

— Matthew 20:23

James unquestionably suffered martyrdom.

Acts records:

"And he killed James the brother of John with the sword."

— Acts 12:2

Stevens reasons that because Christ addressed both brothers and said:

"Ye shall drink indeed of my cup,"

the words may indicate that John also suffered martyrdom.

If so, the later tradition that John survived into extreme old age would require reconsideration.

The argument is possible.

But it should not be presented as conclusive.

Christ's language clearly promises suffering to both brothers.

Whether it necessarily requires both to die as martyrs is a further inference.

That distinction should remain explicit.

Was John Among the Companions of James?

The current draft also records Stevens' proposal that John may have been among those associated with James the Lord's brother when James was arrested and executed.

This reconstruction is considerably more speculative.

The evidence does not expressly identify John in that event.

Stevens attempts to connect several pieces of first-century evidence, but the identification remains conjectural.

It should therefore be presented as:

a proposed reconstruction

rather than:

an established historical fact.

That distinction is necessary because the overall argument is stronger when uncertain details are clearly labelled as uncertain.

John and the High Priest

The Gospel of John records an unnamed disciple who:

"was known unto the high priest."

— John 18:15

Stevens connects this disciple with John and suggests that such a relationship may help explain particular events in John's later history.

Again, this is possible but not demonstrable from the text alone.

The Gospel does not explicitly name that disciple as John in the verse itself.

Nor does it connect that relationship with a later arrest or exile.

Such connections may form part of a historical hypothesis, but they should not be stated as though Scripture explicitly teaches them.

The Exile to Patmos

Revelation states:

> *"I John… was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ."*
>
> — Revelation 1:9

The text gives no emperor's name and no explicit calendar date.

Thus Revelation itself does not say whether John's exile occurred under Nero or Domitian.

Stevens favours an early date and places the exile during the Neronic period.

If this is accepted, Revelation can readily be placed before AD 70.

This dating fits well with a preterist interpretation because Revelation then concerns events approaching within the first-century world rather than events beginning thousands of years later.

But the dating question must still be argued from evidence.

Preterist usefulness is not itself proof of an early date.

CHAPTER 13—Revelation and the Nearness of Its Fulfilment

Revelation and the Nearness of Its Events

The internal language of Revelation deserves considerable attention.

The book begins:

> *"The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass."*
>
> — Revelation 1:1

And:

"for the time is at hand."

— Revelation 1:3

Near the end the language is repeated:

"These sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly be done."

— Revelation 22:6

And:

"Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand."

— Revelation 22:10

These statements sit naturally within an early-date and preterist framework.

If the principal events were still thousands of years distant, the repeated language of nearness requires explanation.

This does not settle every chronological problem, but it forms an important part of the cumulative case for an early Revelation.

Revelation 22 and the Closing Warning

Revelation concludes:

"For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book."

— Revelation 22:18

And:

"if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy…"

— Revelation 22:19

This warning is sometimes treated as proof that Revelation was the final book of the entire biblical canon.

That conclusion goes beyond what the passage explicitly says.

The immediate reference is:

"the words of the book of this prophecy."

The warning unquestionably protects Revelation itself from addition or subtraction.

It does not expressly state:

no New Testament writing can be composed after this point.

Thus Revelation 22 may accord with the idea of a completed canon, but it should not be used by itself to prove that Revelation was chronologically the final biblical book.

Stevens' Proposed Chronology

The present draft summarises the chronology associated with Stevens approximately as follows:

1 Thessalonians — AD 52
2 Thessalonians — AD 52
Galatians — AD 55
1 Corinthians — AD 57
2 Corinthians — AD 57
Romans — AD 58
Matthew — before AD 58
Mark — before AD 58
Luke — AD 58–61
Acts — AD 58–61
John — AD 60–62
1, 2, and 3 John — AD 61–62
James — AD 62
Revelation — AD 62–63
Ephesians — AD 63
Colossians — AD 63
Philemon — AD 63
Philippians — AD 63
Hebrews — AD 63
1 Timothy — AD 63
Titus — AD 63
1 Peter — AD 63
2 Timothy — AD 64
Jude — AD 64–65
2 Peter — AD 64–65

The value of such a chronology is not that every date can be established beyond dispute.

Its value is that it demonstrates the historical possibility of placing the entire New Testament within the pre-AD 70 period, provided the early dating of the Johannine writings is accepted.

That is an important but limited conclusion.

Possible does not mean proved.

CHAPTER 14—John A. T. Robinson and the Case for an Early New Testament

John A. T. Robinson and Early Dating

An important modern contribution to this discussion came from John A. T. Robinson in his work Redating the New Testament.

Robinson is significant because his conclusions concerning chronology did not arise from the same theological commitments as conservative preterist writers.

He questioned many conventional later dates and explored whether the New Testament documents might all belong before the destruction of Jerusalem.

His central observation concerned the silence of the New Testament regarding AD 70 as a completed historical event.

Jerusalem's destruction was one of the most momentous events in first-century Jewish history.

The temple was destroyed.

The sacrificial order was ended.

The political and religious world of Judaism was radically altered.

Yet no New Testament writer plainly says:

Jerusalem has now been destroyed.

Nor:

the temple has now fallen.

Nor:

Christ's prediction concerning the temple has now been fulfilled.

Robinson considered this silence historically significant.

The Force of the Silence Concerning AD 70

An argument from silence must always be used cautiously.

The absence of a statement cannot by itself prove that an event had not occurred.

But cumulative silence can become significant.

The New Testament repeatedly discusses:

Jerusalem,
the temple,
priesthood,
sacrifice,
covenant,
persecution,
approaching judgment,
and the coming destruction of the city.

If many of these writings were composed after AD 70, one might reasonably expect at least some writers to refer explicitly to that event as past history.

Yet they do not.

This does not prove that every New Testament book predates AD 70.

But it creates a legitimate historical question.

Robinson's importance lies partly in refusing to treat late dates as self-evident.

He asks instead:

What evidence actually requires a post-AD 70 date?

That is a fair question.

Predictive Prophecy Must Not Be Ruled Out in Advance

Another important issue concerns the dating of the Gospels.

Some critical approaches have argued that detailed predictions of Jerusalem's destruction indicate that the Gospel accounts must have been written after the event.

But such an argument rests upon a prior assumption:

genuine predictive prophecy cannot occur.

For a Christian who accepts the prophetic authority of Christ, that assumption cannot simply be granted.

Jesus could genuinely predict the destruction of Jerusalem.

Therefore the presence of the prediction itself does not establish a post-AD 70 date.

The dating question must be decided upon broader historical and textual considerations.

Instructions to Flee Make Sense Before the Event

Christ's warnings also possess an immediate practical character.
For example:

"Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains."

— Matthew 24:16
And Luke records:

"And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh."

— Luke 21:20
These are not merely abstract theological statements.
They are instructions.
They tell people what to do when particular conditions arise.
Such instructions make especially natural sense if they were written for Christians who might actually face the approaching crisis.
Again, this does not prove the date of the Gospels by itself.
But it fits naturally within a pre-AD 70 setting.

"This Generation"

Christ says:

"Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled."

— Matthew 24:34
The natural meaning of:

"this generation"

is the generation then living.
Jesus had spoken directly to His disciples.
They had shown Him the temple buildings.
He told them those buildings would be destroyed.
They asked:

"when shall these things be?"

Christ then described the approaching troubles and said that the generation would not pass until these things were fulfilled.
Jerusalem fell approximately forty years later.
From a preterist perspective, this provides a natural chronological framework for the discourse.
It also supports the broader argument that the New Testament

belongs within a world still anticipating the destruction rather than looking back upon it.

Other First-Century Time Statements

The same general issue appears elsewhere.

Christ says:

"There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom."

— Matthew 16:28

And:

"Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come."

— Matthew 10:23

These statements have been interpreted in different ways.

From a preterist perspective they belong naturally to first-century fulfilment.

Robinson's chronological observation is that if such statements had already appeared obviously false by the time Matthew wrote, one might expect explanatory modification.

Instead they remain in their direct form.

This may suggest that Matthew wrote within the period in which their fulfilment was still expected.

Again, the argument is cumulative rather than absolute.

The First Requirement Is Historically Possible

The evidence considered thus far allows a measured conclusion.

It is historically possible to defend a pre-AD 70 date for:

Matthew,
Mark,
Luke,
Acts,
the Pauline writings,
James,
Peter,
Jude,
Hebrews,
and, if an early Johannine chronology is accepted, the

writings of John.

Therefore the first requirement of Stevens' apostolic canonization theory is possible.

But possibility is not proof.

The weakest portion of the reconstruction remains the precise dating of the Johannine corpus and the hypothesis concerning John's early death.

Those points should be acknowledged openly.

The doctrine of apostolic authority does not collapse if Stevens' precise reconstruction is wrong.

That is an important safeguard.

CHAPTER 15—Writing, Collecting, and Certifying the Canon

Writing Is Only the First Question

Even if all twenty-seven books were written before AD 70, two further questions remain.

First:

Were they collected into a recognisable body while apostolic authority was still functioning?

Second:

Were they certified or recognised as canonical by those possessing apostolic authority?

These are more difficult historical questions than the question of composition.

Writing a book is one thing.

Circulating it is another.

Collecting the entire body of New Testament writings is another.

Certifying that complete body as canonical is another still.

Stevens' theory requires all of these stages.

Therefore, after establishing that an early date is possible, the historical argument must proceed further.

A Necessary Distinction

At this stage it is useful to distinguish three propositions.

The first is:

The New Testament writings belong to the apostolic and prophetic foundation established by Christ.

This is the fundamental theological claim.

The second is:

The New Testament writings were already being circulated and recognised as authoritative Scripture during the apostolic age.

There is direct New Testament evidence supporting this.

The third is:

All twenty-seven books were collected together and formally certified as a complete canon before AD 70.

This is the strongest and most historically specific claim.

It requires more evidence.

The first two propositions should not be made unnecessarily dependent upon proving every detail of the third.

The Relevance to Enoch

This distinction also helps us return to the Book of Enoch.

Even if the precise date of every New Testament book remains disputed, the authority of the Christian Scriptures still arises from the apostolic and prophetic revelation given through Christ's appointed witnesses.

The Book of Enoch does not acquire apostolic authority merely because later Christians valued it.

No evidence presented here shows that the Apostles gathered it among their own authoritative writings.

No apostolic text instructs the Church to receive the entire Book of Enoch as Scripture.

Thus the uncertainty surrounding the exact chronology of John does not give Enoch canonical standing.

These are separate questions.

Conclusion

The question:

Were all the New Testament books written before AD 70? cannot be answered merely by appealing to traditional dates.

Many New Testament writings fit naturally within the earlier period.

Acts appears to end while Paul is still alive.

Luke precedes Acts.

The Pauline epistles necessarily belong to Paul's lifetime.

James, Peter, and Jude fit naturally within the apostolic period.

Hebrews speaks of the Levitical order in language compatible with the temple still standing.

The main chronological difficulty lies with the Johannine writings.

Ed Stevens proposes an early chronology for John and Revelation and argues that John died during the Neronic period.

That reconstruction is possible, but portions of it remain speculative.

John A. T. Robinson approached the problem from another direction and drew attention particularly to the striking New Testament silence concerning Jerusalem's destruction as a past event.

His work demonstrates that a pre-AD 70 chronology cannot simply be dismissed without examination.

The result is therefore significant but limited:

A pre-AD 70 New Testament is historically arguable.

But the stronger theory of apostolic canonization requires more.

It must still be shown that these writings were not merely composed, but were collected and recognised as a complete authoritative corpus while apostolic authority remained alive.

That is the next question to which we must turn.

PART FOUR—AD 70, PROPHECY, AND APOSTOLIC INTERPRETATION

John A. T. Robinson, the Destruction of Jerusalem, and the Interpretation of Prophecy

CHAPTER 16—Jerusalem, the Temple, and "This Generation"

The destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 was one of the most significant events of the first century.

The city was devastated.

The temple was destroyed.

The sacrificial system centred upon the temple ceased.

The political and religious order of Judaism was fundamentally altered.

For the Christian interpreter, this event is important for at least two reasons.

First, it bears upon the dating of the New Testament writings.

Second, it bears upon the interpretation of Christ's prophecies

concerning Jerusalem, the temple, and the end of the age.

These two questions are related but should not be confused.

A book may be dated before AD 70 without requiring a preterist interpretation of every prophetic passage.

Likewise, a preterist interpretation of Matthew 24 does not by itself prove the date of every New Testament book.

Nevertheless, the two questions naturally interact.

John A. T. Robinson and the Case for an Earlier New Testament

John A. T. Robinson made an important contribution to the question of New Testament chronology in his work Redating the New Testament.

Robinson was significant because he did not approach the subject from a conservative evangelical or preterist position.

He questioned the conventional dating of a number of New Testament books and asked whether many of them had been placed too late.

His investigation eventually led him to test the possibility that the entire New Testament might belong to the period before the destruction of Jerusalem.

One of his central observations concerned the extraordinary silence of the New Testament regarding AD 70 as a completed historical event.

That silence deserves careful consideration.

The Problem of Conventional Dating

New Testament chronology has often been influenced by larger theories concerning the development of early Christianity.

A scholar may reason that a particular theological idea represents a late development.

The book containing that idea is then assigned a late date.

The late date is afterwards used as evidence that the theology was indeed late.

Such reasoning can become circular.

Robinson sought to reconsider the evidence for dating the books themselves rather than merely inheriting conventional assumptions.

His question was not:

> What date is usually assigned to this book?

It was:

What evidence actually requires that date?

That is a legitimate historical question.

The Destruction of Jerusalem as a Chronological Marker

The destruction of Jerusalem provides a particularly important point of reference.

Jesus had prophesied:

"There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down."

— Matthew 24:2

That prophecy was fulfilled in the events surrounding the Roman destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in AD 70.

If large portions of the New Testament were written after that event, we might reasonably expect some writers to mention its fulfilment directly.

Yet nowhere does a New Testament writer plainly say:

Jerusalem has now been destroyed.

Nor:

the temple has now fallen.

Nor:

Christ's prophecy concerning the temple has now been fulfilled.

The absence of such statements does not by itself prove a pre-AD 70 date.

But when the temple, priesthood, sacrifice, Jerusalem, persecution, covenant, and impending judgment are repeatedly discussed, the silence becomes increasingly noteworthy.

The Temple as a Continuing Reality

The Epistle to the Hebrews provides one of the strongest examples.

Hebrews discusses the Levitical priesthood and sacrifices at considerable length.

The writer says:

"For there are priests that offer gifts according to the law."

— Hebrews 8:4

And:

"And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering

oftentimes the same sacrifices…"

— Hebrews 10:11

This language appears to speak of an order still functioning.

The writer also says concerning the old covenant:

"Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away."

— Hebrews 8:13

The expression:

"ready to vanish away"

naturally suggests that the old order had not yet disappeared completely.

If the temple had already been destroyed, the writer could have pointed to that event as dramatic historical confirmation of his argument.

Yet he does not.

This provides strong support for a pre-AD 70 setting for Hebrews.

Christ's Prophecies and the Question of Dating

Some have argued that the Synoptic Gospels must have been written after AD 70 because their predictions concerning Jerusalem are too accurate to have been written beforehand.

Such reasoning rests upon an assumption which a Christian cannot simply accept:

that genuine predictive prophecy is impossible.

If Jesus Christ truly possessed prophetic knowledge, He could foretell the destruction of Jerusalem before it occurred.

Therefore the accuracy of the prediction cannot itself prove that the Gospel was written afterwards.

The historical dating must be established by broader evidence.

The Practical Nature of Christ's Warnings

Christ's words are not merely theological predictions.

They contain practical instructions.

He said:

"Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains."

— Matthew 24:16

Luke records:

"And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh."

— Luke 21:20

These are instructions addressed to people who might actually witness the approaching crisis.

They are told what to observe.

They are told what to do.

They are told when to flee.

Such instructions have obvious practical meaning before the catastrophe.

Their usefulness is much more difficult to explain if first composed after Jerusalem had already been destroyed.

Again, this does not prove the date of the Gospel by itself, but it fits naturally within a pre-AD 70 setting.

"This Generation Shall Not Pass"

One of the most important statements in the Olivet Discourse is:

"Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled."

— Matthew 24:34

The natural meaning of:

"this generation"

is the generation then living.

Christ was speaking to His disciples.

They had shown Him the buildings of the temple.

He told them that those buildings would be destroyed.

They asked Him concerning those things.

Christ then described approaching events and concluded:

"This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled."

Jerusalem was destroyed approximately forty years later.

This fits naturally within the lifetime of the generation to which Christ spoke.

From a preterist perspective, this provides one of the strongest reasons for interpreting much of Matthew 24 as referring to first-century events.

The Immediate Audience Must Be Taken Seriously

Christ repeatedly addresses those before Him in direct terms.

He says:

"when ye therefore shall see…"

— Matthew 24:15

And:

"when ye shall see all these things…"

— Matthew 24:33

He warns those who would be:

"in Judaea."

He instructs them to flee.

He tells them that the generation would not pass until the predicted events were fulfilled.

A sound interpretation should begin by asking:

What would these words have meant to the disciples who first heard them?

We should not immediately move the fulfilment thousands of years into the future unless the text itself requires us to do so.

CHAPTER 17—The Fig Tree, Israel, and 1948

The Fig Tree

Christ says:

"Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh."

— Matthew 24:32

A popular dispensational interpretation has treated the fig tree as a symbol of national Israel.

The budding of the fig tree has then been identified with the establishment of the modern State of Israel in 1948.

But Christ never says:

"The fig tree represents Israel."

The point of the illustration is stated directly.

When leaves appear on a tree, one knows that summer is near.

Likewise:

"when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors."

— Matthew 24:33

Luke makes the illustration even clearer:

"Behold the fig tree, and all the trees."

— Luke 21:29

This creates a serious difficulty for the view that the fig tree is a coded prophecy of modern Israel.

If the fig tree represents Israel, what do:

"all the trees"

represent?

The more natural interpretation is that Christ is using ordinary observation of nature to teach nearness.

Leaves indicate an approaching season.

The signs He had described would indicate an approaching judgment.

The Problem With Making 1948 the Fulfilment

The establishment of the modern State of Israel in 1948 was unquestionably a major historical event.

The question, however, is whether Jesus predicted that event in Matthew 24.

The text itself does not say so.

The interpretive chain often becomes:

fig tree = Israel

then:

budding fig tree = establishment of Israel

then:

therefore 1948 fulfils Matthew 24

But each stage depends upon an identification supplied by the interpreter.

Christ Himself never makes that identification.

Once that assumption is removed, the entire 1948 generation theory loses its foundation.

"This Generation" and the 1948 Calculations

The identification of the fig tree with Israel has sometimes been

joined to Christ's statement:

"This generation shall not pass…"

The reasoning then became:

Israel became a state in 1948.

That was the budding of the fig tree.

Therefore the generation alive in 1948 would live to see the remaining prophetic events fulfilled.

This led to repeated attempts to calculate the length of a biblical generation.

As the years passed, calculations had to be revised.

The problem did not lie in Christ's words.

The problem lay in the initial interpretive assumption:

the fig tree represents the State of Israel established in 1948.

This provides an important example of how an external historical event can become an interpretive key and then be treated as though Scripture itself supplied the identification.

Providence Is Not the Same as Prophetic Fulfilment

Nothing in this argument requires us to deny that the establishment of Israel in 1948 occurred within the providence of God.

Scripture declares:

"For the kingdom is the LORD'S: and he is the governor among the nations."

— Psalm 22:28

God governs all nations.

Therefore modern Israel exists under divine providence, just as Britain, America, Egypt, Syria, and every other nation do.

But:

Providence is not the same thing as fulfilled prophecy.

An event may be providential without being the specific fulfilment of an ancient prophetic passage.

That distinction is essential.

Otherwise every striking historical event can be turned into a fulfilment of whatever prophecy an interpreter chooses to attach to it.

CHAPTER 18—Israel, the New Covenant, and the Apostolic Interpretation of Prophecy

Ezekiel 36 and the Restoration of Israel

Ezekiel 36 is frequently cited in support of the modern restoration of Israel.

God says:

"For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land."

— Ezekiel 36:24

Taken by itself, this may appear to support a twentieth-century geographical return.

But the prophecy does not stop there.

The very next verses say:

"Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean…"

— Ezekiel 36:25

Then:

"A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you…"

— Ezekiel 36:26

And:

"And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes…"

— Ezekiel 36:27

The prophecy therefore includes:

gathering

cleansing
a new heart
a new spirit
the Spirit of God
obedience

This is not merely a geographical or political restoration.

It is spiritual and covenantal.

The establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 did not result in the national regeneration described here.

There was no national reception of Christ.

There was no national giving of the Holy Ghost in the manner described by Ezekiel.

Therefore, if verse 24 is said to have been fulfilled in 1948, the interpreter must explain why the spiritual elements immediately joined to it were not fulfilled at the same time.

Ezekiel 36 and the New Covenant

The language of Ezekiel 36 closely resembles the New Covenant promises elsewhere in Scripture.

Jeremiah says:

"I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts."

— Jeremiah 31:33

Ezekiel says:

"A new heart also will I give you."

And:

"I will put my spirit within you."

Christ said:

"This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you."

— Luke 22:20

The New Testament repeatedly connects these promises with the saving work of Christ.

The centre of fulfilment is therefore not merely a geographical land.

It is Christ and the New Covenant established in His blood.

Ezekiel 37 and the Valley of Dry Bones

Ezekiel 37 is also frequently associated with 1948.

The prophet sees a valley full of dry bones.

God explains:

"Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel."

— Ezekiel 37:11

Then:

"I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel."

— Ezekiel 37:12

The imagery of restoration is striking.

It is understandable why readers seeing Jewish return to Palestine in the twentieth century perceived a parallel.

But once again, the prophecy continues:

"And shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live."

— Ezekiel 37:14

The restoration is not merely political.

It involves the Spirit of God and spiritual life.

The Two Sticks and the One Shepherd

The second half of Ezekiel 37 makes the Messianic character of the prophecy even clearer.

Judah and Israel are represented by two sticks which become one.

God says:

"And I will make them one nation in the land."

— Ezekiel 37:22

Then:

"And David my servant shall be king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd."

— Ezekiel 37:24

And:

"Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them."

— Ezekiel 37:26

The prophecy therefore includes:

one people
one king
David's promised ruler
one shepherd
an everlasting covenant
God dwelling among them

For the Christian, these promises point naturally to Christ.

Christ is the Son of David.

Christ is the Good Shepherd.

Christ is the Mediator of the everlasting covenant.

The prophecy therefore cannot be reduced to the establishment of a secular political government in 1948.

Isaiah 11 and the Root of Jesse

Isaiah 11 is another passage used in connection with the restoration of Israel.

The chapter begins:

"And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots."

— Isaiah 11:1

The prophecy plainly concerns Messiah.

Later Isaiah says:

"And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people."

— Isaiah 11:10

The Apostle Paul quotes this verse:

"There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust."

— Romans 15:12

This is extremely important.

We are not left merely with competing theological systems.

Paul himself gives us an inspired apostolic application of Isaiah 11.

He connects it with:

Christ

His reign

and the believing Gentiles

That provides the interpretive centre of the prophecy.

The Gathering Must Be Read in Its Messianic Context

Isaiah continues:

"the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people."

— Isaiah 11:11

Some interpreters separate this from verse 10 and make it chiefly a prophecy of a modern national return.

But verse 10 has already placed the chapter in the context of the Root of Jesse and the Gentiles trusting in Him.

Paul explicitly applies that verse to the Gospel.

Therefore any interpretation of the gathering in Isaiah 11 must take seriously the Christological and Gospel context supplied by the Apostle himself.

It is questionable to remove the gathering from that setting and make 1948 the principal fulfilment.

The Apostles Must Interpret the Prophets

This leads to an important hermeneutical principle.

When the New Testament Apostles interpret an Old Testament prophecy, their inspired interpretation must carry greater authority than a later prophetic system.

Paul applies Isaiah 11 to Christ and the Gentiles.

The writer to the Hebrews applies New Covenant promises to Christ.

Peter interprets the prophets through the sufferings and glory of Christ.

Christ Himself taught His disciples:

"And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself."

— Luke 24:27

The great interpretive key to prophecy is therefore not a twentieth-century political development.

It is:

Jesus Christ.

Israel According to the Flesh

The New Testament does not deny the historical privileges of Israel.

Paul says:

"Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants…"

— Romans 9:4

But Paul immediately introduces an important distinction:

"For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel."

— Romans 9:6

And:

"They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God."

— Romans 9:8

Natural descent alone therefore does not establish saving covenant status.

The promise must be understood through God's purpose in Christ.

Abraham's Seed and Christ

Paul says:

"For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus."

— Galatians 3:26

And:

"And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

— Galatians 3:29

This is highly significant.

The New Testament does not direct us away from Christ towards an independent redemptive programme based solely upon natural descent.

It directs us into Christ.

That does not erase ethnic distinctions.

It does mean that covenant blessing and inheritance must ultimately be interpreted through Him.

Romans 11 Must Be Treated Carefully

A balanced argument must also consider Romans 11.

Paul writes:

"And so all Israel shall be saved."

— Romans 11:26

Christians have interpreted this statement in different ways.

Some understand it as a future widespread conversion of ethnic Jews.

Others understand "all Israel" as the complete elect people of God.

Others understand it as the complete number of elect Israelites gathered throughout history.

This study need not settle every aspect of that debate.

One point, however, is clear.

Romans 11 speaks about:

salvation
reconciliation
faith
unbelief
and being grafted into the olive tree

It does not say that the establishment of a political state in 1948 fulfils Ezekiel 36 or Ezekiel 37.

Even a Christian who expects a future large-scale conversion of Jewish people does not thereby have to believe that 1948 was the prophetic fulfilment of those passages.

Those are separate questions.

The Same Interpretive Error

At this point a striking parallel appears with the Book of Enoch.

In Genesis 6 the method can become:

Scripture says "sons of God."

Then Enoch supplies:

fallen angels.

Jude speaks of angels who sinned.

The conclusion is then drawn:

Genesis must therefore describe fallen angels mating with women.

But the decisive connection has been supplied from outside Genesis.

Likewise with modern Israel:

Ezekiel speaks of restoration.

History records:

the State of Israel was established in 1948.

The conclusion is then drawn:

Ezekiel must therefore have predicted 1948.

Again, the decisive identification has been supplied by the interpreter.

In both cases the proper question is:

Where does Scripture itself make the connection?

Scripture Must Not Be Interpreted by Headlines

Prophecy is particularly vulnerable to sensational interpretation.

Wars occur.

Nations rise.

Political alliances change.

Earthquakes take place.

Jerusalem appears in the news.

A striking event is then attached to a prophetic text.

The interpretation may seem persuasive because the event is dramatic.

But the Christian must resist the temptation to interpret Scripture by the newspaper.

The meaning of Scripture was not waiting for a twentieth- or twenty-first-century event before Christians could understand what God had revealed.

The Apostles themselves interpreted the prophets.

Their interpretation must govern ours.

The Importance of AD 70

For the preterist, AD 70 is therefore important for two interconnected reasons.

First, it provides a natural fulfilment of Christ's warnings concerning Jerusalem and the temple.

Second, it provides an important chronological marker for the writings of the New Testament.

The temple was standing when Christ spoke.

The disciples were told that it would be destroyed.

They were instructed concerning events they could witness.

Christ said:

"This generation shall not pass…"

The destruction occurred within that generation.

This makes AD 70 a far more textually grounded reference point

for Matthew 24 than the establishment of Israel in 1948.

Robinson's Contribution

John A. T. Robinson did not settle every question concerning New Testament chronology.

His proposed dates remain debated.

His importance lies elsewhere.

He challenged the assumption that later dates should be accepted without demonstration.

He drew attention to the remarkable absence of any unmistakable New Testament reference to Jerusalem's destruction as a completed event.

He therefore asked whether the documents might be earlier than commonly assumed.

For those examining apostolic authority, preterism, and the formation of the canon, this question is significant.

If the New Testament writings belong to the period before AD 70, then they belong unquestionably to the living apostolic age.

That strengthens the argument that their authority derives from Christ's commissioned Apostles and prophets, rather than from later ecclesiastical institutions.

Apostolic Authority and Later Religious Literature

This also provides a standard by which later writings may be considered.

A writing may:

claim ancient authorship,
contain religious teaching,
preserve genuine traditions,
quote Scripture,
or even contain some truth.

None of these things makes it apostolic Scripture.

The Book of Enoch provides a clear example.

Jude authenticates the historical Enoch as a prophet.

But Jude does not authenticate the whole composite work known as 1 Enoch.

Likewise, later Christian infancy stories may speak concerning Christ without possessing apostolic authority.

And later prophetic systems may attach modern historical events to biblical prophecy without proving that the biblical writers themselves made those identifications.

The decisive question remains:

Does this interpretation or writing belong to the authoritative revelation given through Christ and His Apostles?

Conclusion

The destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 stands as a major interpretive and chronological landmark.

The New Testament repeatedly speaks of Jerusalem, the temple, sacrifice, priesthood, persecution, and approaching judgment.

Yet nowhere does it plainly describe the destruction of the city and temple as a past event.

This silence cannot prove the date of every New Testament book by itself.

But it is historically significant.

The teachings of Christ also point naturally towards first-century fulfilment.

He spoke to His disciples.

He warned those in Judaea.

He told them what they would see.

He told them when to flee.

And He declared:

"This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled."

The preterist interpretation therefore takes seriously the immediate audience and the temporal language of the prophecy.

By contrast, the interpretation which identifies the fig tree with the modern State of Israel and its budding with the year 1948 introduces an identification which Christ Himself never makes.

Luke's words:

"the fig tree, and all the trees"

make the natural illustrative meaning clearer still.

The same caution applies to Ezekiel and Isaiah.

Ezekiel's restoration includes cleansing, regeneration, the Spirit of God, David's Son, one Shepherd, and an everlasting covenant.

Isaiah 11 centres upon the Root of Jesse, and the Apostle Paul

applies that prophecy to Christ and the believing Gentiles.

These passages therefore demand a Christ-centred and apostolically controlled interpretation.

The establishment of Israel in 1948 may be a remarkable providential event.

But providence is not the same thing as prophetic fulfilment.

The Christian must therefore refuse to allow modern history to become a new source of revelation by which ancient prophecy is redefined.

The same principle governs our examination of the Book of Enoch.

Ancient tradition must not determine the meaning of Scripture.

Modern political events must not determine the meaning of Scripture.

The Apostles must not be displaced by later systems of interpretation.

The proper order is:

Christ
His Apostles
the inspired Scriptures

and then every later tradition, historical claim, or interpretation tested beneath that authority.

That brings us back to the central principle of this study:

Scripture must interpret Scripture, and the inspired apostolic witness must govern our understanding of the prophets.

FINAL CONCLUSION

THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE AND THE DANGER OF ADDING TO WHAT GOD HAS REVEALED

The subjects considered in this study may at first appear unrelated.

The Book of Enoch.

The sons of God in Genesis 6.

The Nephilim.

The Ethiopian Bible.

The authority of the Apostles.

The formation of the New Testament canon.

The destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

The interpretation of Matthew 24.

The establishment of the modern State of Israel in 1948.

Yet all these questions eventually lead to one fundamental issue:

By what authority do we determine what God has revealed?

That is the real subject of this book.

The danger confronting the Christian is not always an open denial of Scripture.

More often the danger arises when something is added to Scripture.

An ancient tradition may be added.

A religious book may be added.

A theological system may be added.

A speculative interpretation may be added.

A modern political event may be added.

Once the addition has been repeated often enough, Christians may begin to speak as though the interpretation itself were part of the inspired text.

That is the error against which this study has sought to warn.

Christ Is the Foundation

The Christian Church did not arise from the authority of a later ecclesiastical institution.

Christ said:

"I will build my church."

— Matthew 16:18

Peter confessed:

"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

— Matthew 16:16

Christ is the foundation and chief corner stone.

Paul writes that the Church is:

"built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone."

— Ephesians 2:20

The authority of the Church therefore proceeds from Christ.

Christ appointed His Apostles.

Christ authorised them.

Christ promised them the Holy Ghost.

Christ caused His teaching to be preserved through their ministry.

The Apostles did not possess independent authority.

Their authority was derived from Him.

For this reason the Christian canon must ultimately be understood in relation to Christ and His authorised apostolic and prophetic witnesses.

The Church Recognised Scripture, It Did Not Create It

Scripture was inspired by God before any later council listed it.

Paul writes:

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God."

— 2 Timothy 3:16

The Church could recognise inspired writings.

It could preserve them.

It could copy them.

It could translate them.

It could defend them against corruption.

But the Church could not take an uninspired book and transform it into the Word of God by ecclesiastical decree.

This is why the question concerning the Book of Enoch cannot be answered simply by saying:

"The Ethiopian Church includes it."

That establishes the fact of Ethiopian reception.

It does not establish apostolic inspiration.

The distinction must be maintained.

The Ethiopian Bible Must Be Treated Fairly

The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church deserves to be treated accurately.

It is an ancient Christian tradition.

It preserved the complete Book of Enoch.

That preservation has been of enormous historical value.

The classical Ethiopian biblical language, Ge'ez, preserves a textual tradition whose Old Testament was substantially translated through the Greek Septuagint.

The complete Ethiopic Book of Enoch likewise belongs to a

later transmission history involving earlier Semitic material, Greek transmission, and eventual Ge'ez preservation.

None of this should be denied.

But neither should these historical facts be made to prove more than they actually prove.

They demonstrate preservation.

They demonstrate antiquity.

They demonstrate reception.

They do not demonstrate that the historical Enoch, the seventh from Adam, wrote the whole composite work now called 1 Enoch.

Nor do they demonstrate that Christ and His Apostles received that entire work as canonical Scripture.

Enoch the Prophet and the Book of Enoch Must Be Distinguished

Jude states:

"And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these."

— Jude 14

The Christian should believe this without reservation.

Enoch was a real man.

He walked with God.

He was translated.

He genuinely prophesied.

But Jude does not say:

"Everything contained in the Book of Enoch is inspired."

The distinction is essential.

A genuine saying of Enoch may have been preserved within a later collection without making the entire collection inspired Scripture.

Therefore:

Enoch the prophet is authenticated by Scripture.

But:

the entire later Book of Enoch is not authenticated merely because Jude preserves one genuine prophecy of Enoch.

This distinction allows us to honour Jude without being compelled to receive the whole of 1 Enoch as Scripture.

Genesis 6 Does Not Require the Watchers Story

The Watchers narrative in 1 Enoch is elaborate.

It speaks of heavenly beings descending from heaven.

It gives them names.

It describes their agreement.

It describes their attraction to women.

It describes their sexual unions.

It describes gigantic offspring.

It describes forbidden knowledge.

It describes supernatural consequences extending far beyond anything stated in Genesis.

Genesis itself says much less.

"the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose."

— Genesis 6:2

That is the inspired text.

Everything beyond that must be demonstrated rather than assumed.

Adam, Abel, Seth, and the Sons of God

The immediate Genesis narrative supplies a coherent human setting.

Adam is expressly called:

"the son of God."

— Luke 3:38

Abel was a righteous worshipper.

Cain murdered him.

Seth was appointed:

"instead of Abel, whom Cain slew."

— Genesis 4:25

Then:

"began men to call upon the name of the LORD."

— Genesis 4:26

The narrative therefore provides a human line associated with the worship of God before Genesis 6 speaks of the "sons of God."

This does not force the Sethite interpretation beyond all possible dispute.

But it demonstrates that the phrase need not be restricted to

angels.

The text can be understood coherently within human history.

The Attraction of the Eye and Ungodly Marriage

Genesis tells us what attracted the sons of God:

"the daughters of men… were fair."

They saw.

They desired.

They chose.

They married.

The difficulty therefore need not be found in supernatural biology.

The spiritual danger lies plainly in the unions themselves.

Throughout Scripture God's people are warned against marriages which draw them away from Him.

Israel was warned:

"Neither shalt thou make marriages with them."

— Deuteronomy 7:3

And the reason was:

"For they will turn away thy son from following me."

— Deuteronomy 7:4

The New Testament likewise warns:

"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers."

— 2 Corinthians 6:14

And marriage is to be:

"only in the Lord."

— 1 Corinthians 7:39

The principle is therefore thoroughly biblical.

The corruption of God's professing people through ungodly relationships requires no mythological explanation.

Balaam Demonstrates the Same Principle

The history of Balaam provides a striking example.

Balaam could not successfully curse Israel.

Yet Moses later said:

"these caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the LORD in the matter of Peor."

— Numbers 31:16
Israel:

"began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab."

— Numbers 25:1
Those relationships led to idolatry:

"they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods."

— Numbers 25:2
Christ later refers to:

"Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel."

— Revelation 2:14
Here Scripture itself gives us the pattern.
Sensual attraction.
Ungodly union.
Spiritual corruption.
Idolatry.
Judgment.

That pattern provides a far more scripturally grounded comparison with Genesis 6 than a theory of angels producing hybrid offspring.

The Nephilim Do Not Prove Supernatural Parentage

Genesis 6:4 uses the Hebrew word:

נְפִילִים — Nephilim

The Authorised Version renders this:

"giants."

But the English word comes through a translation history.
The Hebrew Nephilim was rendered in the Greek Septuagint by:

γίγαντες — gigantes

which later contributed to the English word "giants."
The Hebrew term itself does not mean:

"children produced by fallen angels and human women."

Scripture never provides that definition.

Genesis instead speaks of:

"mighty men which were of old, men of renown."

The same term Nephilim appears again in Numbers 13:33 concerning the sons of Anak.

These were inhabitants of Canaan.

They occupied territories.

They were fought.

They were defeated.

Joshua cut off the Anakim from the land.

Nothing in these passages requires them to be supernatural hybrids.

The appearance of Nephilim after the Flood actually creates a serious difficulty for the hybrid theory unless further unrecorded supernatural events are introduced.

Again, one theory requires another theory to sustain it.

The simpler interpretation is that the biblical term itself does not define a supernatural biological species.

Scripture Does Not Present Angels as a Reproductive Race

Angels are described as:

"ministering spirits."

— Hebrews 1:14

Mankind was created:

"male and female."

— Genesis 1:27

Mankind was commanded:

"Be fruitful, and multiply."

— Genesis 1:28

Christ says concerning angels:

"they neither marry, nor are given in marriage."

— Matthew 22:30

Scripture nowhere establishes a reproductive angelic order.

It nowhere states that fallen angels possess biological powers unavailable to the holy angels.

It nowhere says that angels can father human children.

Those propositions arise from the Enochic interpretation.

They do not arise plainly from the canonical text.

Jude and Peter Must Be Allowed to Say What They Say

Jude tells us that angels:

"kept not their first estate."

— Jude 6

Peter tells us:

"God spared not the angels that sinned."

— 2 Peter 2:4

These passages establish angelic rebellion and divine judgment.

They do not tell us that the angels married women.

They do not say that they produced the Nephilim.

They do not explicitly identify them with the sons of God in Genesis 6.

To make those connections, the interpreter must import additional information.

The proper method is simpler:

Let Jude say what Jude says.

Let Peter say what Peter says.

Do not make them say what Enoch says merely because the narratives can be joined together.

The Danger of Filling Biblical Silence

This principle extends far beyond Enoch.

Human beings dislike unanswered questions.

Where Scripture is brief, curiosity wants detail.

Religious tradition readily supplies it.

The process is familiar.

A possibility becomes a story.

A story becomes a tradition.

A tradition is repeated.

Repetition gives it authority.

Eventually later generations forget that the story was never part of Scripture in the first place.

This is how legends arise around biblical persons.

Stories concerning the childhood of Jesus developed long after the apostolic Gospels.

The story of the child Jesus forming birds from clay eventually appears in later Christian infancy traditions and again in the Qur'an.

But the Apostles never delivered it as part of the Gospel.

The Christian therefore has no reason to receive it as inspired revelation.

The same test must be applied consistently to Enoch.

Apostolic Authority Provides the Boundary

The Christian faith was not left open indefinitely to new revelation.

Jude writes concerning:

"the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."

— Jude 3

Peter refers to Paul's writings alongside:

"the other scriptures."

— 2 Peter 3:16

Paul required his letters to be read among the churches.

New Testament writings were already being circulated and recognised during the apostolic period itself.

This is important.

Canonical recognition did not suddenly begin in the fourth century.

The roots of recognition are already visible within the apostolic Church.

The stronger claim argued by Ed Stevens, that all twenty-seven books were written, collected, and certified before AD 70, requires further historical demonstration.

But the more fundamental principle remains secure:

The authority of New Testament Scripture belongs to the apostolic and prophetic foundation established by Christ, not to the creative power of a later council.

AD 70 and the Apostolic World

The destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 provides an important chronological and prophetic boundary.

Christ foretold the destruction of the temple.

He warned His disciples concerning events they would see.

He instructed those in Judaea to flee.

He said:

"This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled."

— Matthew 24:34

The destruction occurred within the lifetime of that generation.

John A. T. Robinson drew attention to another important fact.

Nowhere in the New Testament is the destruction of Jerusalem unmistakably described as a completed historical event.

The temple is threatened.

Judgment is approaching.

The disciples are warned.

But no writer plainly says:

Jerusalem has now fallen.

This does not prove every New Testament book was written before AD 70.

But it does make the early chronology worthy of serious examination.

Prophecy Must Not Be Reinterpreted Through Modern Events

The same interpretive caution applies to modern prophetic claims.

The establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 was historically remarkable.

But historical importance is not the same thing as prophetic fulfilment.

Matthew 24 never says:

"The fig tree represents the future State of Israel."

Luke says:

"Behold the fig tree, and all the trees."

— Luke 21:29

The illustration concerns observable signs of approaching events.

The leaves indicate the nearness of summer.

The signs Christ described indicated the nearness of the judgment He had foretold.

To transform the fig tree into a coded reference to a twentieth-century political state requires an identification Christ Himself does

not supply.

Ezekiel Cannot Be Reduced to 1948

Ezekiel says:

"I will take you from among the heathen… and will bring you into your own land."

— Ezekiel 36:24

But the prophecy continues:

"Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you."

— Ezekiel 36:25

And:

"A new heart also will I give you."

— Ezekiel 36:26

And:

"I will put my spirit within you."

— Ezekiel 36:27

The prophecy concerns far more than geographical relocation.

It concerns cleansing.

Regeneration.

The Spirit.

Obedience.

Covenant blessing.

Likewise Ezekiel 37 speaks of:

"David my servant"

as king,

of:

"one shepherd,"

and of:

"an everlasting covenant."

These promises direct the Christian towards Christ and the New Covenant.

They cannot be reduced simply to the creation of a political state in 1948.

Isaiah Must Be Interpreted Apostolically

Isaiah 11 begins with:

"a rod out of the stem of Jesse."

It concerns Messiah.

Paul quotes the prophecy:

"There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust."

— Romans 15:12

Here an Apostle interprets the prophet.

That interpretation must govern the Christian.

The centre of Isaiah's prophecy is Christ.

The gathering of God's people must therefore be understood within the Messianic setting which the Apostle himself supplies.

A later political system cannot possess greater interpretive authority than Paul.

The Same Error Appears in Ancient and Modern Forms

We can now see the parallel.

With Enoch:

Genesis says "sons of God."

Enoch says:

fallen angels.

Jude says:

angels sinned.

The interpreter combines them and concludes:

Genesis must teach the Watchers story.

But Scripture never makes the whole connection.

With modern dispensational interpretation:

Ezekiel speaks of restoration.

History records:

Israel became a state in 1948.

The interpreter concludes:

Ezekiel must therefore have predicted 1948.

Again, the decisive identification is supplied by the interpreter.

In each case the same question must be asked:

Where does Scripture itself make the connection?

That question is one of the most important safeguards available to the Christian reader.

Providence Is Not Revelation

God governs history.

Nothing occurs outside His providence.

But providential events are not new Scripture.

The existence of modern Israel may be providential without being the fulfilment of a particular prophecy.

A war may be providential without being Armageddon.

A political alliance may be providential without being Daniel's final kingdom.

An earthquake may be providential without being a sign that an interpreter has correctly identified the end of the world.

History must be judged by Scripture.

Scripture must not be rewritten by history.

The Responsibility of the Reader

The purpose of this work is therefore not merely to persuade the reader to adopt a particular conclusion.

The reader has a responsibility before God to examine these matters.

The Bereans were commended because they:

"searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so."

— Acts 17:11

That is the spirit in which these questions should be approached.

If someone teaches that angels mated with women, let him demonstrate it from Scripture.

If someone maintains that the Book of Enoch is inspired Scripture, let him establish its apostolic and prophetic authority.

If someone says that the fig tree of Matthew 24 is the State of Israel, let him show where Christ makes that identification.

If someone says Ezekiel 36 was fulfilled in 1948, let him explain the cleansing, new heart, Spirit, and covenant contained within the same prophecy.

If someone claims a later revelation from God, let him demonstrate what authority Christ gave for receiving it.

The Christian should not be intimidated by teachers who present themselves as possessing secret knowledge.

The proper question remains:

What saith the Scripture?

A Warning Against Sensational Religion

Spectacular interpretations possess a natural attraction.

Fallen angels.
Hybrid giants.
Secret heavenly knowledge.
Hidden books.
Lost Scriptures.
End-time chronologies.
Modern wars fulfilling prophecy.
Political states identified with ancient symbols.

Such ideas attract attention precisely because they are extraordinary.

But extraordinary claims require more than enthusiasm.

They require biblical proof.

Fascination is not revelation.

Antiquity is not revelation.

Tradition is not revelation.

A modern headline is not revelation.

The Christian already possesses the revelation God intended His Church to receive.

The Sufficiency of the Word of God

The deepest issue is therefore the sufficiency of Scripture.

If God has spoken, His Word does not require completion by mythology.

It does not require secret books.

It does not require later prophets.

It does not require modern political events to reveal what the Apostles could not understand.

It does not require teachers claiming hidden knowledge.

The Scriptures are sufficient to make the man of God:

"perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works."

— 2 Timothy 3:17

This does not mean history, archaeology, language, Jewish literature, or early Christian writings have no value.

They have considerable value.

They may illuminate.

They may explain historical backgrounds.

They may show what ancient people believed.

They may help us understand how interpretations developed.

But they remain servants.

They must never become masters of the inspired text.

Where God Has Spoken

The safest theological discipline is simple.

Where Scripture speaks clearly, believe it.

Where Scripture gives a reasonable inference, distinguish inference from explicit revelation.

Where Scripture is silent, resist the temptation to fill the silence with certainty.

Paul gives an important principle:

> *"that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written."*
>
> — 1 Corinthians 4:6

The Christian honours revelation partly by respecting its boundaries.

To refuse speculation is not intellectual weakness.

It is submission.

There are matters God has chosen not to reveal.

We are not authorised to complete His revelation for Him.

A Final Appeal

This study began with a question concerning the Book of Enoch.

It has ended with a much larger question.

What is our final authority?

If our authority is ancient tradition, then Enoch may be accepted because an ancient church preserved it.

If our authority is ecclesiastical succession, then later churches may claim authority to determine revelation.

If our authority is religious experience, then new visions and prophecies may continually arise.

If our authority is contemporary history, then every generation may reinterpret prophecy according to the events appearing in its newspapers.

But if our authority is Christ speaking through the prophetic and

apostolic Scriptures, then every later claim must stand beneath that Word.

That is where the Christian must remain.

Christ is the foundation.

The Apostles are His authorised witnesses.

The Scriptures are the written testimony delivered to the Church.

Everything else must be tested by them.

The Book of Enoch must be tested.

The Ethiopian canonical tradition must be tested.

Church traditions must be tested.

Preterism must be tested.

Dispensationalism must be tested.

Our own interpretations must be tested.

No theological system is above correction.

No respected teacher is above examination.

No ancient tradition is beyond question.

No modern event is permitted to dictate the meaning of Scripture.

The standard remains:

"To the law and to the testimony."

— Isaiah 8:20

And:

"What saith the scripture?"

— Romans 4:3

If an interpretation cannot stand before that test, the Christian has no reason to receive it merely because it is ancient, popular, exciting, or confidently taught.

We should therefore return continually to the Word of God.

Search it.

Compare it.

Read it in its context.

Allow the Apostles to interpret the prophets.

Allow Scripture to interpret Scripture.

And where Scripture has not spoken, have the humility to say:

God has not revealed this, and I will not pretend that He has.

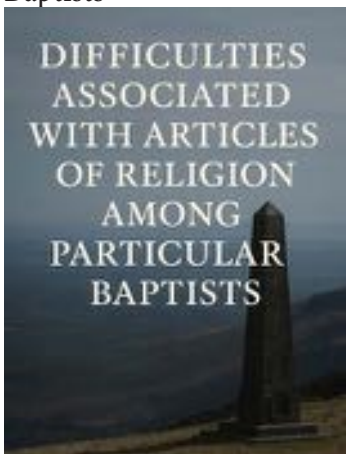
That is not a retreat from faith.

It is faith submitting itself to the authority of God.

FURTHER PUBLICATIONS

DIFFICULTIES ASSOCIATED WITH ARTICLES OF RELIGION

Among Particular Baptists



David Clarke

Articles of Religion are important when dealing with matters of the Christian Religion, however problems occur when churches fail to recognize there is a growth in grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ in any believer. When a person first believes in the Lord Jesus Christ they cannot possibly have a comprehensive knowledge of a churches constitution or its articles of religion, before solemnly subscribing to them. The author David Clarke has introduced the Doctrines of Grace to Bierton Particular Baptists Pakistan, situated in Rahim Yar Khan, Pakistan and bearing in mind his own experience with articles of religion he has compiled Bierton Particular Baptists Pakistan articles of religion from the first Bierton Particular Baptists of 1831,of which he is the sole surviving member, the **First London Baptist Confession, 2nd edition 1646,** and those of Dr John Gill, in order to avoid some of the difficulties encounter by Particular Baptist during the later part of the 19 century and since. This booklet highlights the problem and suggests the Bierton Particular Baptists Pakistan is as step in the right direction.

Isaiah 52:8 Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the LORD shall bring again Zion.

Available as a PDF from BiertonParticularBaptists.co.uk

Contents

Introduction
Articles of Religion Important
Authors Testimony
Bierton Particular Baptist Church
A Difficulty Over Articles Of Religion
Written From Experience
Bierton Particular Baptists History

1 First London Particular Baptists Confession 1646, 2nd Edition

The Development of Articles Of Religion
Act of Toleration 14 Additions That Are Wrong

2 London Baptist Confession 1689

Notes on The London Baptists Confession1689

3 Bierton Particular Baptists Articles of Religion, 1831

Difficulties Over Articles of Religion
Notes on Bierton Particular Baptists 1831

4 The Gospel Standard Articles of Religion 1878

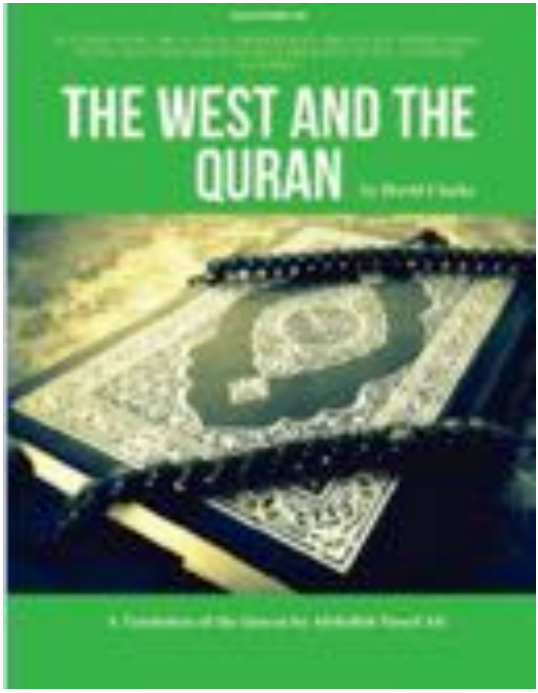
Observations of the Gospel Standard
Articles of religion
Letter to Mr Role's of Luton
Added Articles
Comments Article 32
The Difficulties Of these Articles Proved
Serious Doctrinal Errors Held
Recommendation for Serious Minded

5 Bierton Particular Baptists Pakistan 2016

6 Appendix 60

Gospel Standard 31 Articles

THE WEST AND THE QURAN



Translation of The Quran

Authored by David Clarke, Authored with Abdullah Yusuf Ali

ISBN-13: 978-1548914042 (CreateSpace-Assigned)
ISBN-10: 1548914045
BISAC: Religion / Biblical Criticism & Interpretation / General

This Publication treats the subject of the Quran and the reason for presenting this is due to a rise in Islamic terrorism which has caused great concern to many in the West. So with the current massive influx of Muslim's migrating from the various parts of the world into Europe, Great Britain and the USA, it seems reasonable to discover the roots of Islam in order to deal with the problems that have occurred. Our Politicians seem clueless on how to deal with this enemy and when they are questioned they appear to know relatively little about Muhammad and his teaching. One of our greatest Prime-ministers in Britain William Gladstone declared the Quran an "Accursed book" and once held a copy of Muhammad's Quran up in Parliament, declaring: "So long as there is this book

there will be no peace in the world".

Winston Churchill was one of the greatest leaders of the 20th Century, who served as Prime Minister of the United Kingdom during World War II and again from 1951 to 1955.

As an officer of the British Army in 1897 and 1898, he fought against a Pashtun tribe in the north west frontier of British India and also at the Battle of Omdurman in Sudan. In both of those conflicts, he had eye-opening encounters with Muslims. These incidents allowed his keen powers of observation and always-fluid pen to weigh in on the subject of Islamic society.

While these words were written when he was only 25-years-old (in 1899), they serve as a prophetic warning to Western civilisation today.

"How dreadful are the curses which Mohammedanism (Islam) lays on its votaries! Besides the fanatical frenzy, which is as dangerous in a man as hydrophobia in a dog, there is this fearful fatalistic apathy."

Churchill apparently witnessed the same phenomenon in several places he visited. "The effects are apparent in many countries: improvident habits, slovenly systems of agriculture, sluggish methods of commerce and insecurity of property exist wherever the followers of the Prophet rule or live."

He saw the temporal and the eternal tainted by their belief system. "A degraded sensualism deprives this life of its grace and refinement, the next of its dignity and sanctity," he wrote.

The second-class status of women also grated at the young officer. "The fact that in Mohammedan law every woman must belong to some man as his absolute property, either as a child, a wife, or a concubine, must delay the final extinction of slavery until the faith of Islam has ceased to be a great power among men," he noted.

"Individual Muslims may show splendid qualities, but the influence of the religion paralyses the social development of those who follow it. No stronger retrograde force exists in the world."

Well before the birth of modern Israel, its terror tactics and drive for world domination were felt. "Far from being moribund, Mohammedanism is a militant and proselytising faith. It has already spread throughout Central Africa, raising fearless warriors at every

step, and were it not that Christianity is sheltered in the strong arms of science, the science against which it (Islam) has vainly struggled, the civilisation of modern Europe might fall, as fell the civilisation of ancient Rome."

With the influx of Muslim people from the various parts of the continent along with their culture all of which is shaped by the teachings of Muhammad in the Quran.

Some objections and Observations are as follows:

Islam means submission

Islam does not mean peace

Multiculturalism is a failure.

Islam denies the natural rights of women

An Objection Halal Meat

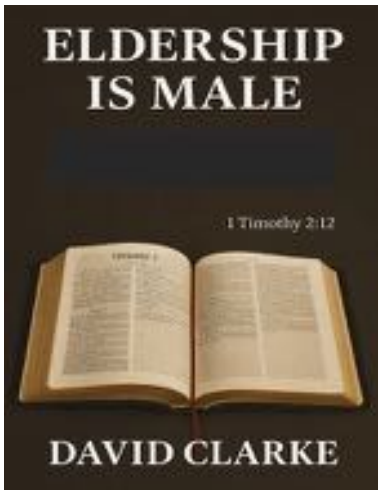
An Objection To Shari-ah Law

Objects to Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

An objection to Jihad which seeks over throw Western culture through education, Social activity, political activation and Law.

For this reason, this publication is made available for education purposes. With this prayer that God may grant us all wisdom as to how we may respond to the rise and threat of Islam.

ELDERSHIP IS MALE



Does The Lord Jesus Want Women To Rule As Elders In His Church ? ?

Authored by Mr David Clarke Cert E

BISAC: Religion / Christian Theology / General

When treating the subject of women elders in the church we are not dealing with the affairs of a secular society and so it has nothing to do with women's rights, equality of sex or race in the world. This matter only relates to men and women in a Christian church. It is about the rules of the house of God, which is the church of the living God and rules for those who are members of the body of Christ and members of an heavenly county.

The Suffragettes

Emmeline Pankhurst 1858 -1928) was a Suffragette and worked very hard to bring equal rights for women to vote as men. In the year of her death all women over 21 gained the right to vote. The Suffragette movement brought about many changes for the better in a secular society but not so for women seeking to follow Christian principles. One of her famous quotes was, "Trust in God She shall provide". Terms which do not reflect Christian beliefs. We know God will provide and He is not a she.

In the USA and the UK, women's political rights were brought into general political consciousness by the suffragettes and since then there have been legal rights granted to the Lesbian, gay,

bisexual and transgender groups, same sex marriages, along with the development of the feminist movement and the appointment of persons from the LBGT community to responsible positions in the Church of England. All of this has caused conflict in the Christian community due to differences beliefs of right and wrong.

This book seeks to show what the bible has to say about the role of women in the church and family. Since these rules are taught by the Apostles of Christ they are the word of God to us and we should obey. The secular world may differ and turn from the narrow path taught in scripture but we should follow the word of God, this is our wisdom.

AND SUCH WERE SOME OF YOU

David Clarke

AUTHOR'S FOREWORD

When I first published my story of conversion from Crime to Christ I thought every one would be delighted to hear all about it so I asked my boss the principal of Fareham College to write a foreword to my book. I was very disappointed, surprised and hurt at his answer.

He said he would have nothing to do either privately or publicly

with a book that overlay refers to drug taking.

I understood he was a Christian and thought that he would have been delighted and pleased to hear my story and have it told to all the world.

You see I had written all about my past criminal life as a youth, my imprisonment for violence and drug taking that led to my downfall.

It was when I was down and at rock bottom that I cried out to God for help asking Jesus please help me. He answered me on the 16th of January 1970 saying He was with me and would never leave me and that what I had been going through was nothing compared to what hell was like.

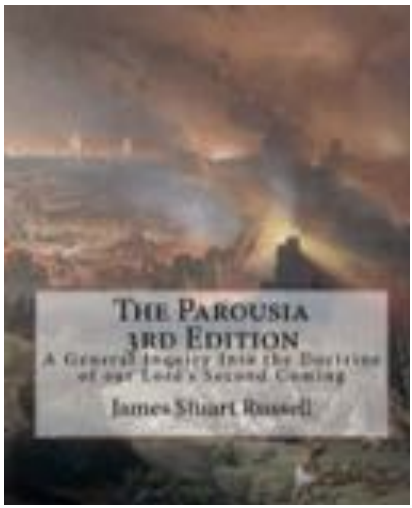
You see title of my book was, 'Converted on LSD Trip' and on its front page was a write up of the court case where I confessed to 24 crimes and a three year career of undetected crimes and my former profligate life.

So this time my book has a different title and written to remind my readers, religious and none religious friends, family and acquaintances that we have all sinned and cannot throw stones at others thinking we are better than them and that such were some of you. I other words we are all in need of the salvation I write about and have experience. I was saved for a life time of crime immorality and drug taking and live to tell the story.

This tells true story and reason for Christmas.

Available as a PDF from BiertonParticularBaptists.co.uk

THE PAROUSIA



James Stuart Russell

The Parousia is J. Stuart Russell's landmark examination of New Testament prophecy and the promised coming of Jesus Christ.

First published in 1878, this influential work asks a fundamental question: when Jesus and the apostles declared that Christ's coming was "near," "at hand," and expected within their own generation, should those statements be understood according to their plain and immediate meaning?

Through a detailed study of the Gospels, the Epistles, and the book of Revelation, Russell argues that the principal prophecies concerning the Parousia—the coming of Christ in judgment—were fulfilled in the first century, culminating in the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple in AD 70.

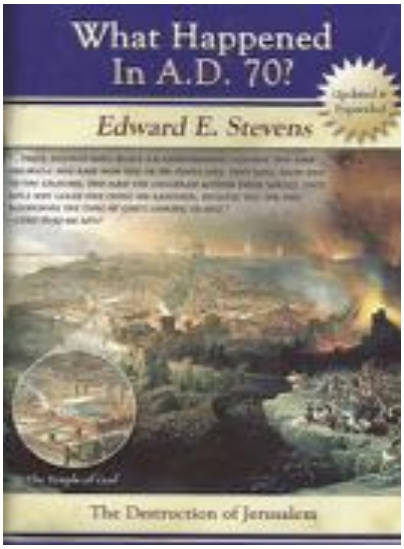
Russell carefully examines Christ's Olivet Discourse, the apostolic expectation of His return, the resurrection, judgment, the gathering of the saints, and the prophetic imagery of Revelation. His interpretation emphasises the original audience and historical setting of the New Testament, challenging readers to consider what these prophecies meant to those who first heard and received them.

Widely regarded as a foundational defence of the Preterist interpretation of prophecy, The Parousia has influenced generations of theologians, ministers, and Bible students. Its close attention to

the New Testament's time statements has compelled many readers to reconsider traditional futurist interpretations and to recognise the significance of Jerusalem's fall in redemptive history.

Scholarly, thorough, and deeply concerned with the authority of Scripture, this classic work invites readers to examine the biblical evidence for themselves and to search the Scriptures to determine whether these things are so.

WHAT HAPPENED IN A.D. 70



Ed. Stevens

This book introduces a view of Bible prophecy which many have found extremely helpful in their Bible study. It explains the end time riddles which have always bothered students of Bible prophecy. It is a ***consistent view*** which makes the book of Revelation much easier to understand. It establishes when the New Testament canon of scripture was completed, demolishes the liberal attack on the inspiration of the New Testament, and is more ***conservative*** on most other issues than traditional views. And there is ***no compromise*** of any essential Biblical doctrine of the Christian faith.

The key to understand any passage of scripture has always been a good grasp of the historical setting in which it was originally written {***audience relevance***). Two thousand yeas from now our history, culture, politics and language will have changed dramatically. Imagine someone then having to learn the ancient language of

"American English" to read our USA newspapers! If they saw one of our political cartoons with a donkey and elephant, what would they think? How would they go about understanding it? Not only would they have to study the language, but also our culture, history, politics and economics. The same applies to Bible study. If we are really going to understand what all the "donkeys and elephants" (beasts, harlots, dragons, etc.) Symbolize in the book of Revelation, we will have to seriously and carefully study the language, history, culture and politics of the First Century. Of course, the truths essential for salvation are couched in simple language that everyone can grasp. But there are numerous scriptures in the Bible which are "hard to understand" (cf. 2 Pet 3:16), and Bible prophecy is one of those things which must be approached with much more focus on the original historical art cultural context (audience relevance)

One of the main purposes of this book is to provide a closer look at the historical framework behind the New Testament. Many have found it helpful to lay aside (at least temporarily) the legion of speculative opinions about the book of Revelation, and look at a more historical alternative, which is that ***the book of Revelation was written to the first century church and had primary relevance to them.*** It warned of events that were about to happen in their lifetime, and prepared them for the tribulation and other events associated with the End of the Jewish Age.

Atheists, skeptics, Jew, Muslims, and liberal critics of the bible use the supposed failure of those end times events to occur in the First Century to undermine the integrity of Christs and the inspired NT writings.

Non-Christian Jews laugh at this supposed non-occurrence, and use it as evidence that Jesus is not the Messiah. Their forefathers in the flesh rejected Jesus in His first coming because He did not fulfill the Old Testament prophecies in the materialistic and nationalistic way that they were expecting, even though Jesus told them that His Kingdom was not of this world, and that it would be within them instead. Yet it seems that many futurists today are expecting that same kind of materialistic and nationalistic kingdom to arrive at a future return of Christ Are they making the same mistake about the Second Coming that the Jews made about His first coming? Jesus

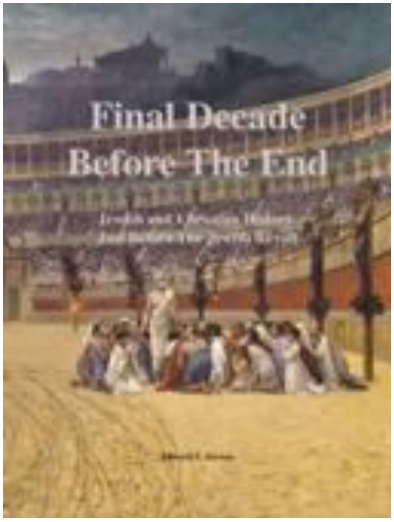
repeatedly said His Kingdom is "not of this world" and that it would "not come with observation." It is a spiritual entity, and it has arrived We live in it. Both futurist Christians and non-Christian Jews need to realize this.

Christians are finally beginning to seek alternatives to the fatally flawed ***futurist*** interpretation. This book introduces the Preterist view.

"Preterist" simply means past in fulfillment It means that Christ has already fulfilled His promise to return and consummate redemption in Himself and His ongoing spiritual kingdom (the church). We should be like the noble-minded Bereans and "search the scriptures daily to see whether these things are true" You might want to have your Bible open alongside as you read

April 17,2010

FINAL DECADE BEFORE THE END



Ed. Stevens

Ever since the booklet, **What Happened In AD 70?** was published in 1980, there have been constant requests for more detailed information about the Destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish, Roman, and Christian history associated with it. Over the years since then I have studied Josephus, Yosippon, Hegesippus, Tacitus, Suetonius, Eusebius, the Talmud, Midrash, Zohar, Pseudepigrapha, Church Fathers, Apocrypha, Dead Sea Scrolls and other Jewish/

Christian writings, trying to determine exactly what happened, when it happened, and the effect it had upon the Church.

Then in 2002, after I began to promote J. S. Russell's view of a literal rapture, the demand for historical documentation of the fulfillment of all eschatological events dramatically increased. That forced me to dig much deeper. So in 2007 I put together a 21-page chronology of first century events. Two years later in 2009, we published a more substantial 73-page manuscript entitled, First Century Events in Chronological Order. That helped fill the void, but it did not go far enough. It only increased the appetite for a more detailed and documented historical reconstruction of first century events.

The book of Acts does not give a lot of details about the other Roman and Jewish events that were happening while Paul was on his various missionary journeys. For those events, we have to go to the other contemporary Jewish and Roman historians such as Josephus and Tacitus. The closer we get to AD 70, the more important all of those Jewish and Roman events become. They form an important backdrop behind the Christian events, and show how all the predictions made by Jesus were literally fulfilled. Every High Priest and Zealot leader that we encounter from AD 52 onwards are directly connected with the events of the Last Days. Things are heating up, not only for the Christians, but also for the Jews and the Romans.

Paul on his missionary journeys was clearly following a plan which was providentially arranged for him by Christ: (1) to plant new churches among all nations and not just Jews, (2) appoint elders and deacons in every church (Acts 14:23; 1 Cor. 4:17), (3) write inspired epistles to guide them, (4) instruct his fellow workers to "teach these things to faithful men who would be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2:2), and (5) establish the Gentiles in the Church and make them one united body with the Jews (Eph 4). Everywhere Paul went, he followed this pattern. We see this clearly as we study the historical narrative in Acts and Paul's other epistles that were written during this time. These are essential patterns that the apostles evidently bound upon both Gentile and Jewish Christians, and which were intended to be the pattern for all future generations of the eternal Church (Eph 3:21; 2Tim 2:2).

We begin our study by looking at the most likely dates for

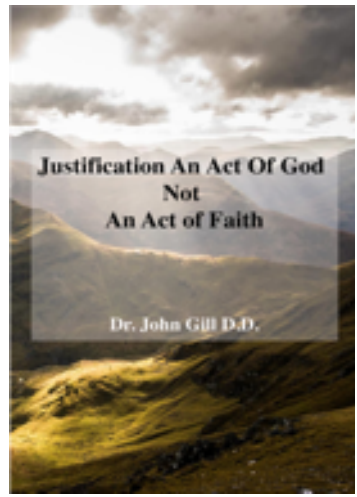
Matthew (AD 31-38) and Mark (AD 38- 44), and then proceed to the first three epistles of Paul (Galatians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians), which were written on his second missionary journey (AD 51-53). Including these five books in our study allows us to date all twenty-seven books of our New Testament, and show how the NT canon was formed and completed before the outbreak of the Jewish War in AD 66. The study of New Testament canonization in itself is a good reason for reading this work, without even looking at the historical fulfillment of all of the end-time prophecies that we document here.

After looking at the dates for those first five books, we then move on into the third missionary journey of Apostle Paul which began in AD 54. It was during this final dozen years (from AD 54 until AD 66) when the birth pangs and signs of the end started increasing in both intensity and frequency, along with a quickening pace of NT books being written. We show how 19 of our 27 NT books (70 percent) were written during those last five years just before the Neronic persecution (AD 60-64). The Great Commission was finished, and the rest of the end-time events predicted in the Olivet Discourse were fulfilled during that time of "tribulation" upon the church and the "days of vengeance" upon the unbelieving Jews (Luke 21:22).

Edward E. Stevens
INTERNATIONAL PRETERIST ASSOCIATION
Bradford, Pennsylvania
April 17,2010

Available as a PDF from BiertonParticularBaptists.co.uk

JUSTIFICATION AN ACT OF GOD



Dr. John Gill

Alternatively Eternal Justification an Antidote To Fullerism Paperback – November 21, 2020

By Dr John Gill DD (Author), David Clarke (Editor)

This book treats the subject of Justification by faith and is Dr. John Gill's treatment of the subject as taught in his Body of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity in which he demonstrates that Justification is an Act of God and not an act of man's faith. It is written Abraham believed God and it was counted unto him for righteousness Gill shows that the 'it' that was counted to him for righteousness was the righteousness of Christ as it is to all who are justified by faith. Abraham believed God and by faith depended and believed all the promises of God, just as believers do in the Old and New Testaments. We are not justified because of the exercise of our faith as many Christian beliefs, but by believing in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, which is an act of the new man, and a faith that draws assurance from the promises of God in the scripture.

INTERNET ARCHIVE

To access freely our many publications please go to:

https://archive.org/details/@davidolores

Available as a PDF from BiertonParticularBaptists.co.uk